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HEART MESSAGES FROM THE PSALMS

RALPH WELLES KEELER

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HEART MESSAGES FROM THE PSALMS

By
RALPH WELLES KEELER

With an Introduction by
ROBERT W. ROGERS

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To
ELEANOR ELIZABETH KEELER
AND
RALPH WELLES KEELER, JR.

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Federation of Missionary Societies
Chattanooga, Tenn. Nov. 18-1931

Turkey - American Hospital in Constantinople - run controlled by American Board of Missions - Started by Red Cross Sister - Later ran - but after war by Turkish Dr. Trained nurses needed Independent Missionaries very few can write. Hospital charges - 30,000 given 20,000 made about!

INTRODUCTION

It was one of the fine sayings of the mystic Arndt that "what the heart is in man, that is the Psalter in the Bible," and he who sought for every encouragement of the inner life of God's kingdom among men went not astray in seeking in the incomparable book a rich treasure. What Arndt sought and found in the sixteenth century shone no less clearly in the centuries that have since passed, as succeeding generations opened the treasure and garnered each for himself out of the store that never grew less. But every generation must seek anew; naught that others have garnered avails to satisfy the renewing needs of men. So it happens that a new heart and hand and a fresh and vigorous mind have gone a-searching, and lo, dear Reader, here's the treasure trove set out fair and beautiful for you. Take it and be wise; own it as your own and be happy. But before you read would you hear another's witness? Here it is, for I have read and am the wiser, have possessed as though never before the secret of the Book of Psalms and am happy. For I have read in this little book many a wise saying in modern words, full of life, fresh, real, true and good, and you shall read them now. I congratulate you on this opportunity, and count my friend, the author, very happy indeed so to serve this present age.

ROBERT W. ROGERS.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

To many the Psalms are merely songs of yesterday. Some of them have been memorized in childhood; others have been read in the responsive service at the hour of worship. One or two have become imbedded in the literature of succeeding generations. But to the masses of people the Psalms seem not to have spoken in strong, convincing terms of the great emotions of life to-day.

The Psalms have not been at fault. Folks have not communed with them as they are wont to do with later poets. Accustomed to the poetical forms of the last three hundred years, men have often failed to catch the appeal of these lays of antiquity, sung by Hebrews long since dead.

Yet in the upheaval of thought and social structure now going on men are turning in every direction for some message for life. Where better seek it than in the great songs of Israel? In an hour like ours it may be that fellowship can be established between those who have lived and have sung of God, and ourselves who need him so sorely.

The message of the poet knows neither time, place, nor age. It is marked by a universal characteristic which sets vibrating heart-chords the world over. Translate it from language to language, and it finds a response, if it really is poetry and not merely verse. For poetry sings of the universal experiences of the race, its griefs and joys, its disappointments and aspirations, its loves, its hates, its hopes. It is a soul singing itself out into other souls.

The psalmists were poets. So well did they sing that we listen back through the ages, that we may not lose a note. They did not write in rime, but with vigorous terseness and a remarkable power of condensation they put their poetry into rhythm with a balanced symmetry of form and sense. Poetasters and the erudite rejoice in the details of form and structure of these songs of Israel.

Our quest, however, is for a message. As we have the

Psalms they fall into three groups: personal, national, and liturgical. It is the personal psalms that are studied in these lessons. No matter how deeply we are concerned in the broader aspects of life, our viewpoints and attitudes are based on a personal philosophy. The psalmist speaks to us out of his personal experience, and our own experience responds. With a mood like his we can think in our own way to the use of his conclusions in our own life. And his conclusions have value for us. They rest upon the foundation of faith in God, upon which our own civilization and spiritual relationships are also based.

The aim of these lessons is to make the Psalms live in personal experience to-day. While a careful and accurate exposition is given of each psalm the stereotyped method of presenting it has been avoided. The significance of the psalm both in the life of the psalmist and in the life of the psalmist's people is explained. Emphasis is placed upon the universal character of the experience or emotion prompting the writing of the psalm and the value of its message as a part of our thinking. And finally, the practical stimulus of a study of this kind is shown in concrete application to daily living. Live, pointed questions for discussion help to enforce this.

Heart Messages from the Psalms was first taught to the Men's Bible Class of the Pleasant Ridge Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, of which the author was privileged to be the teacher for several months. Many helpful criticisms and practical suggestions were received during the process. The writer acknowledges his gratitude for the cooperation by the men of this class which made possible the "trying out" of these lessons before putting them into their final form.

The author would also acknowledge with great appreciation the scholarly and critical help of Ellen Coughlin Keeler, in the writing of these Heart Messages from the Psalms.

RALPH WELLES KEELER.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

It will be a great help to any student of the Psalms to read them in an edition of the Bible in which they are printed as poetry and with regard to their form. An exceedingly handy and helpful edition of the Psalms is The Psalms and Lamentations, edited by Richard G. Moulton (The Modern Readers Bible), in two volumes. An illuminating Introduction to the Psalms is printed in the first volume.

Of the smaller commentaries The Psalms (in two small volumes) in The New Century Bible, and The Psalms (in three small volumes) in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, are among the best. The former are by Professor Davison and Professor T. Witton Davies, the latter by Dr. A. F. Kirkpatrick.

Those having The Worker and His Bible, by F. C. Eiselen and Wade Crawford Barclay, will find in it a section on the Psalms which is of great value.

CHAPTER I

THE DELIGHTS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

ADDITIONAL READINGS, PSALMS 15 AND 101

The First Psalm

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the
wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers:
But his delight is in the law of Jehovah;
And on his law doth he meditate day and night.
And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
The wicked are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous;
But the way of the wicked shall perish."

Making Distinctions

The Modern Way. Most folks to-day would find this psalm both quaint and old-fashioned were the poet to present it in the morning paper of our hustling cities. The hurrying rush of present-day business life would have it paraphrased. Many would wish to repeat it thus:

"Blessed is the man who 'gets there' by any possible means,
That walketh in the counsel of 'big interests,'
That standeth in the way of political and financial advancement,
That sitteth on the board of directors,
That looketh on his fellows with scorn and contempt,
That thinketh that he alone knoweth the secrets of life,
That pusheth and shoveth until he standeth alone,
That maketh his ethics to fit his expediency,

That delighteth to grind his fellows with his little power,
That counteth on God as a need in time of death,
That rejoiceth that he is able to do the whole task of life regardless of man and God."

Yet, tested by the experiences of the centuries, the psalmist was right. The modern rendering saps the real joy out of life. No one lives continuously in the spotlight of self-satisfaction. There come hours when a deeper happiness is demanded than the joy of achievement or the idle hour of venting one's cynicism on the world. The psalmist had the right idea. His was an abiding happiness, which added value to every commonplace experience in life. An old fogy, perhaps, to the rising generation, but a man possessed of a contented mind. And this not of the stagnant variety. He was alive. He knew the sorrow and sin of life. He had met the man who throws a wet blanket over every human joy. The "knockers" had had their fling at him as they sat swapping nothings at the city gate. He had not written *finis* to the book of a man's activities. Rather, he had gained a poise which stood by him despite the hard things in life. So he wrote his psalm as a man who has looked at the world and chosen its best.

Making Distinctions. Good and evil never travel well together. The distinction between them is too great. As man has developed and life has increased in its complexity this has become more apparent. Every age has had its men of vision who have urged that "the wages of sin is death." The advocates of the negative value of right living have been in the majority. The positive doctrine that righteousness is the pathway to fuller life is the burden of the psalmist's song. There is an accrued value in doing the will of God. He does not ignore the avoidance of evil. Far from it. But light and life, darkness and death are weighed on the opposite sides of the scales. He calls sin by its first name. He places satisfaction in right living on the plane of usefulness to society. There are two ways of life, and as he points them out they are aflame with the marks of a man's own experience.

Negative Righteousness. The negative side of the psalmist's righteousness is seen in those things which he pur-

posely avoids. There are some experiences in which he will not participate. Are the centers of his thought-life to be dominated by the thoughts and ideas of evil men? They talk of lust, and oppressions of the poor, of opportunity for quick gain. To share in the thinking of such men would make him less sensitive to any allurement that might lurk in their suggestions. Will he have any part in the habits of those who habitually stray from the path of right? To know the right and yet participate in evil is folly. And what about those self-sufficient men who scorn the help of God, who with their defiant and cynical free thinking are immune to argument or reproof? Will he be found among them? Not he. Why let go a heritage of happiness because other men have it not? With friend and foe among those who make the right choice difficult, he writes his own answer in the words:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers."

He knows their jeers. But he knows God also. He stands on a principle. Those who think and do evil, those who hurl their shafts of ridicule against things good, shall not be his companions. One feels like cheering for the ancient singer!

Positive Righteousness. Negative goodness of itself is not sufficient for virile souls. The great adventure of positive righteousness calls to a thorough trying-out of the constructive possibilities of a good life. Men yearn for a chance to smash evil, not merely to avoid it. The "Thou shalt not" cries out for a companion motive of "Thou shalt." Thus it was in the experience of the psalmist. And is it not so with us as well? Does the mere avoidance of evil, excellent as that is, satisfy our longings? Shall we keep ourselves clean the while a multitude are ruined by petty sins and outright violence? Are we not responsible for the brothel, the murders, the sins of those whom we avoid? Shall we be satisfied with talking about the evils of our community, and never wipe them out? Is there not a

desire to do something for the kingdom of God as well as share in its blessings? The demands of our growth in fellowship with God require this even if our own yearning did not crave for it. The psalmist is one with us when he steps beyond the choosing of the folks with whom he will associate and sets a standard of action for himself. He asks for the full knowledge of God; then he goes about the task of securing that knowledge. What a giant for cleaning up a city such a man could be! Why do we stop with our own satisfaction in God?

Some Setbacks to Folly

The Value of Meditation on God's Word. There is more than one way of using God's Word. How do we use it? Do we read it hastily to grasp just its trend? Do we study it for the purpose of using its messages for argument, and debate, for quoting in prayer meeting, or do we con it over and over as a personal revelation of life? It was this turning over of each word and phrase to which the psalmist's hours of meditation were given. All divine revelation became to him a guide to life. Every righteous precept that was available became a part of his thinking. He stored his mind with the treasures of spiritual joy. He sought to know God's will for him by thinking through his own life in the light of his meditations on the law of God. He did not want to know the law in order to tell others how bad they were. He delighted in God. He rejoiced in God's Word. Of course he did not have all of it that we have, but he reveled in what he had. He tried it out in his relations with others. He grew enthusiastic over it. His plan of life became a safeguard against the lures of the ungodly, the sinners, and the scoffers. Duty became easier because the plan of the psalmist's life was centered in the will of God for him. What a rebuke is this to us!

The Testimony of Life. The measures of this song roll out with the assurance of a man who "knows." The singer has seen the palm tree growing by the river or fed by the channels used to irrigate the parched soil. He has noted

its evergreen foliage and has had pleasure in its fruit. Its sturdiness has appealed to him, and its constant development to the fullness for which it was intended grips his imagination. "Just so," he cries, "is the righteous man. Fed by the streams of God, he develops as God intended that he should develop, just as surely as do the foliage and fruit of the water-nourished palm. The righteous man may well be happy, for he carries through to a successful end the destiny appointed to him by his Creator." "Eliminate the handicap of trying to carry a smug face and a soul of hell," he would say. "Clean house, if you would live right, and refurnish entirely after the cleaning." Do meditation and experience summon us to a testing of this truth for ourselves?

Raising Chaff. "Light-weight" men and women always abound. Less than the breeze on a thresher's floor blows them away. Only that which is of value is ever preserved permanently. Useless things and useless folks ultimately go to the scrap heap. "Chaff" souls are fanned out in garnering the grain of the Kingdom. And that process is at work where exorbitant charges are made as well as where souls are sold for a mess of pottage, as well where "our best citizens" pay wages below a living scale as where drunkards and murderers gather. Only the righteous inherit the kingdom of God. And while the chaff and straw may sway in the breeze and glisten in the sunlight before the day of harvest, their glory ends then. The husbandman builds barns only for the grain with its life-giving power. The chaff and straw are blown away or left to deteriorate in the field. A chaff soul can have nothing but the destiny of a chaff soul.

> **"For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous;**
> **But the way of the wicked shall perish."**

God does not mince matters when it comes to giving a man his real name.

The Day of Appraisal. No sane man would argue with the psalmist. As a man thinks and lives, so is he and so shall he be. A righteous man will inherit a righteous man's heritage and receive a righteous man's reward. This sounds

scriptural. It is. It is from the pages of human experience. It does not matter what experiences a man meets in life, but it does matter how he meets them. God justifies his own righteousness in the way in which righteous men develop and magnify his name by their daily living. Hence the righteous are daily setting their own appraisal on their lives. This appraisal God confirms to them in the contentment and happiness which they enjoy. But for the wicked there is no joy, either present or future. The ways in which men deceive themselves in the matter of happiness are apparent even to themselves. Outwardly there may be a simulation of peace and joy, but within is a riot of unrest and an awaiting for they know not what. It all savors of "the morning after." They have chosen a path which leads below the levels of spiritual satisfaction. In moments of honest thought they realize, as did the psalmist, that

> **"Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous;**
> **But the way of the wicked shall perish."**

The End of the Trail. The end of every trail is decided in part by its beginning. A life lived under the watchful care of God becomes a way of joy and peace, and its journey ends in a life eternal. God's knowledge is not theoretical. He knows. And the journey of a righteous man involves God's approval, care, and guidance. It leads to God himself. God takes care that the traveler arrives at the journey's end. To the latter it has all the assurance expressed in Bryant's "Lines to a Waterfowl." When watching it wing its way across the heavens, he cried out:

> **"He who from zone to zone**
> **Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,**
> **In the long way that I must tread alone**
> **Will lead my steps aright."**

God also knows the manner of life of the wicked and its rebellion in ignoring the unalterable laws of his government. And by those same laws he knows that the way of the wicked can lead only to destruction, that the end of the trail for such is spiritual death. James Russell Lowell has voiced this experience:

"O glorious Youth that once wast mine!
O high Ideal! all in vain
Ye enter at this ruined shrine
Whence worship ne'er shall rise again;
The bat and owl inhabit here,
The snake nests in the altar-stone,
The sacred vessels moulder near,
The image of the God is gone."

God's Providence. The confidence in God's providential care expressed by the psalmist has back of it the trust of the faithful worshiper of God of his day. Men then believed that all misfortune, trouble, and sorrow were direct punishments for particular sins. It took firm conviction and strong courage, therefore, to believe that "righteousness pays," when to the righteous as well as to the wicked came alike the ordinary experiences of life. Sickness, misfortune, hardship, death—these were the common lot of both good and bad. Would it not be an easy matter to join with those whose doctrine was to "eat, drink, and be merry," to seek justification for fellowship with those who from the Jews' standard of righteousness were sinners, men who had missed the mark or gone astray? In the next step one would become a scoffer at the religion of Jehovah. It is the method used to-day to conceal personal sin.

But the psalmist thought more deeply than many of his contemporaries. His thinking led to the conclusion that the providence of God is not an arbitrary matter, governed by whim and notion. He saw back of it all the great laws of God's character. He realized that manifested providence is God's stamp on what life has brought forth for judgment. He noted the transitory nature of any advantage that the wicked might have over him. He rejoiced that, while at times it might seem that the wicked and the good are blessed alike, it is not so. The developing life of righteousness has a happiness and contentment of which the unrighteous are ignorant. Providence to the psalmist lay in ultimately receiving from God such blessings as his life merited according to the laws of God. With a growing joy in his knowledge of the laws that lead to fellowship with God he applied this knowledge to his own development.

By-Products of Yesterday

Growing a Character. No man inherits what we call character. Physical characteristics and likenesses are handed down from parent to child. Certain tendencies of strength or weakness, mental and moral, are transmitted from one generation to another. But character is developed by each individual life itself. Its sources are found in environment, training, and education. Everything with which we come in contact contributes to the making of our character. Every person who in any way touches our life has a part in making us what we are. This emphasizes the wisdom of the psalmist in avoiding all thought and action that would hinder the normal development of good character. It was not the sign of a weakling thus to do. He was a strong man protecting and conserving his strength. For he did not merely avoid evil: he sought the strengthening sources of right. His fellowship was with God. His character was the product of constructive forces, and the wisdom of his way has been justified by the ages. He made good, and we profit by it.

Habits and Destiny. Those people who lay the unhappy destiny of their lives at the door of some unlucky star under which they were born are mistaken. We are largely the makers of our own destinies. The laws of life are open to us all. The choice of life's ending is placed in our own hands. But it is vain to think that destiny can be decided after the life has been so far lived out that the laws of life have been violated. The single actions that lead to habits make the mold of our destiny.

"One deed may mar a life,
And one can make it;
Hold firm thy will for strife,
Lest a quick blow break it!

"Even now from far on viewless wing
Hither speeds the nameless thing
Shall put thy spirit to the test.
Haply or e'er yon sinking sun
Shall drop behind the purple West,
All will be lost—or won!"

So sang Richard Watson Gilder. So thought the psalmist, as his avoidance of evil habits proves. And so we know as we recount the experiences of the years that have given direction to the life that we now are living. Indeed, is it not this knowledge that causes us to counsel our children more wisely than we ourselves have lived? Is it not this that starts us seeking for ourselves the joy of right living for the days that remain?

The Approach to God. The psalmist knew the joy of fellowship with God. We also may know that fellowship if we will commune with him. Fellowship is established wherever communion is sincere. He who communes with the stars has a fellowship with the heavenly bodies of which others are ignorant. And through fellowship comes a knowledge of that with which we commune. It is our growing knowledge of God that enables us to understand his will. In making this plain to his disciples Jesus once said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." The communion which these men had been privileged to have with the Master led directly through their fellowship to a fuller knowledge of God's will. This same opportunity is ours to-day. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," says Jesus. The approach to God lies open before us all.

What About To-day? The same problem the psalmist faced is with us to-day. Theological terminology does not alter truth. Conditions are different. We scoff at religion, not at the city gate, but at the club, in the office, at the shop. We counsel with the wicked in renting property for immoral purposes, in backing vile political schemes, in failing to see what goes on about us. We stand in the way of sinners and excuse ourselves by claiming we do it more artistically, or else blame it to our temperament. Yet righteousness is basically the same in all ages. Progress is not in loosening God's laws. It is, rather, in recognizing that the method of attaining a life of steadfast righteous-

ness changes, because of changed conditions of life and a fuller revelation of God in succeeding generations. The requirement of the righteousness that is acceptable to God varies as man comes to understand more clearly God's will for his children.

But, on the other hand, it becomes richer and more complex than that which gave happiness to the ancient singer in Israel. It involves all that is epitomized in the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Men are still finding fuller content of meaning for this commandment. The larger outreach of soul therein implied brings to us to-day happiness undreamed of by those of old. But we find this happiness only as we discover for ourselves God's will for us as individuals. Those who merely study road maps and make no journeys know little of the joy of traveling. To know the way of righteousness and then not to walk therein gives none of the delights to be found along the way. The happiness of the psalmist will be for us simply a delightful picture of a good man who lived in the past if we fail to put its possibilities into everyday usage. The contentment that abides must come from our own development. And spiritual development is dependent upon spiritual practice. The appraisal which God puts upon our lives is not based on what we have heard, or think, or know, but on our daily doing of his will. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Then heed the call of Frederic Lawrence Knowles, to

> **"Seize thy staff! beyond this height**
> **We shall find the Infinite light!**
> **Gird your thigh! This sword shall hew**
> **Paths that reach the untroubled blue!**
> **Though dark mountains form the stair,**
> **It is ours to climb and dare!**
> **Law, truth, love—the peaks are three:**
> **Sinai, Olives, Calvary!"**

Questions to Think About

In what way would we write the first psalm?

What value is placed upon happiness in our estimate of things?

Why must happiness come from within?

How far can others control our happiness?

Is it always possible to distinguish between the good and evil in life?

What happens to the sinner who repents late in life?

What reasons do people often give for not avoiding evil?

Does spiritual life develop to fruition, or is it freely given?

What does life hold for the righteous man?

Do the outward experiences of life determine our status in righteousness?

Is it a sign of weakness to shun evil? Do we gain strength by facing it?

What is the strengthening source of right?

By what act of worship have we found the approach to God?

What questions would you like to ask about this psalm?

CHAPTER II

THE INSPIRATION TO REVERENCE

ADDITIONAL READING, PSALM 19

The Eighth Psalm

"O Jehovah, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth,
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens!
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength,
Because of thine adversaries,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honor.
Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet:
All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field,
The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
O Jehovah, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

The Basis of Reverence

Reverence in Daily Life. Neither the robes of ecclesiasticism nor the ermine of the bench of themselves cause us to pay homage to a small soul strutting in official camouflage. The same failure to be revered attends the "humble" souls of the Uriah Heep type. No one exacts reverence from us unless they possess genuineness. Hypocrisy puts a quirk in character which prevents us from kotowing to its whited sepulcher. Burns spoke for the race when he cannily remarked, "The rank is but the guinea's stamp."

Unless those qualities exist which demand respect and esteem, and sometimes an element of awe or fear, reverence on our part is entirely lacking.

It is because of this that men speak slightingly of others in high position. There has not been a sufficient manifestation of noble character to awaken a response. Not that men do not desire to be stirred by such feelings. They do. The finding of one able to arouse a sense of reverence within us causes rejoicing and satisfaction. The little group of friends to whom we tell our troubles and some whose names have become household words with us, meet our requirements in this respect. We think and speak of them reverently. We watch them with loving eyes. We expect them to do great things. The little shrine at which we revere them becomes a sacred place in our heart. Out of our reverence for them comes a keener consciousness of any possibilities of fine character we may possess ourselves. The quest for other folks worthy of our reverence becomes an adventure of expectation and interest. That day when we are able to place another on the plane of reverence is marked off in our list of events. For on that day there comes a fresh analysis and appraisal of ourselves.

Reverence for God. A man is not less careful in coming to an attitude of reverence for God than he is in coming to such an attitude toward one of his fellows. It is something that cannot be put on and off like a suit of clothes. It is a part of one's deepest feelings. Fear smote the heart of the primitive savage as he thought of his God. Like a small boy of to-day caught stealing apples, he expected chastisement. Reverence had no place in his thought of God. Only the increase of knowledge set esteem alongside of fear. Of course, the attributes given to the many gods of early days were a handicap to reverence. It took generations of experience to accumulate material upon which to base a fuller knowledge of the Infinite. The meditation of such men as the psalmist helped. The expression of the psalm indicates the mental processes involved. He considered that reverence for God needs as sure a basis as reverence for neighbor Obad or Hezekiah. Assured of the worthiness of his God to be revered, he

gives full meed of the best his heart contains. Nay, more, he thinks within by contrast and makes a fresh start at measuring up to all that he might be.

Among the Stars. Did you ever pitch your tent on the summit of a high mountain? If so, you know the poet who wrote the eighth psalm. The crowded streets and the careworn faces of the city seem far away in the quiet night. The folly of watching the stock-market ticker is of another world. The climbers up society's shaky ladder seem only hectic fiction. All that is real is the strange sense of aloneness with the stars. The psalmist knew the sanctity of this sort of atmosphere. The affairs of life that loom so large down in the valley are seen in a new perspective here. What matters it whether the Joneses invite us to their select dinner party? Who cares whether the preacher shook hands with the Smiths before noticing us? And the fact that Byron climbed to his present job by tramping over our shoulders—what of it? Man seems not so important a creature or the leading styles so heavy a part of life's burden. Folks look like crawling things on the dimly lit road at the base of the mountain. The stars alone are great. And out of the gleam of millions of stars and the soft glow of the moon comes the startling thought of God who created it all. All our knowledge of God comes to mind with a rush when he speaks to us at such times. We review every known manifestation of his power and goodness. And whether we are dollar chasers of the twentieth century or an ancient watcher on an Eastern hilltop, we are bound to cry:

> **"O Jehovah, our Lord,**
> **How excellent is thy name in all the earth,**
> **Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens!"**

Some Ancient Thinking

Jehovah God. The name "Jehovah" is not a familiar name for God to most people. Only during the past ten years has the term been used at all widely. But to the patriarchs whose life history we read in the Old Testament it was *the* name above all others. When God made

a covenant with Abraham he gave his name as "Jehovah" to this ancient sheik. At first the name had only such meaning as Abraham's conception of God could put into it. It took the passing years and the ever-increasing relationships of the Israelites with God to deepen its meaning. Just so the name "Father" means merely the man who "gets things" for us in childhood. The realization that he also watches over us, protects us, guides us, and instructs us comes with the years. That he helps us out of his own experience to grapple with the problems of life is frequently unrecognized until the years of maturity prove him to be comrade and friend. David knew a greater Jehovah than did Abraham. When the psalmist sang forth his reverence for the Creator of the heavenly bodies, Jehovah had become a part of Israel. So close is this relationship that Israel's enemies are thought of as Jehovah's enemies, and Israel's friends the friends of God. Yet what babes in the universe are men compared with the stars? Why should Jehovah wage his warfare through the instrumentality of men? Why trouble to subdue those who oppose him? A little thinking of this sort in these days of world-chaos would be refreshing. For in some places men have appeared to be endeavoring to wage war, subdue enemies, and establish themselves in the earth through the instrumentality of God, instead of permitting themselves to be used by God.

The Universe of the Ancients. The modern schoolboy has some difficulty in understanding how anyone ever could have thought the earth a flat disk. And to insist on his thinking of the sky as a solid covering, studded with stars, with here and there a window through which rain came when opened, would cause him to challenge the intellect of the one making the suggestion. Such a universe, however, was the one known to the psalmist. A moon swung across the sky, and each night the sun returned around the outskirts of the earth in order to be ready for the next day's journey. Yet with such a conception, the glory of it all was great enough to inspire reverence for the One able to create it. And the psalmist gave credit for it all to his God, Jehovah. Not yet freed from the influence of the

anthropomorphic conceptions of his fathers, he beheld God fixing each star in its permanent position and starting the moon on its mission of light. The writer did not know all that we know about the stars, but his mountainside was aglow with the same glory that floods our mountain camp. His knowledge of the universe was pitifully limited, but the wonder of it all was just the same. And a God able to create such wonderful works was worthy of his esteem and reverence. It set him to thinking. One thought rushed close after the other. The stories of Jehovah's care told by his father and the other older men were all recalled. What he had observed himself came to his mind. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, the God of Jacob, and the God of Isaac, was a wonderful God. He was the God of his fathers. Aye, he was his God also. And Jehovah held all these starry hosts in the hollow of his hand. A man might well stand erect and stretch to his full height who has such a God as Jehovah. How much more cause have we both to reverence God and make ours the kinship he offers to us.

"What Is Man?" It was no small question of speculative philosophy that followed the psalmist's meditation on the wonders of the heavens. He was thinking chiefly about God. What majesty and power God must have to do such work! It was almost beyond his power to conceive of it. But difficult as comprehending so great a God as Jehovah was, it was even more difficult to understand why such a God should give so important a place in his universe to men. The value placed on a human life in the days of David was not great. The individual was merged in the community. And the welfare of the community always came before the welfare of the individual. An individual life, yes, many individual lives, might be wiped out without much concern on the part of those left. Yet the dignity of human life was made plainer when the psalmist realized that the Creator of the starry heavens also was mindful of man. The human race was important in God's sight. Man had been made in the very image of God. Spiritual possibilities within stirred him to things far beyond mere earthly aims and worldly honors. Above the physical was rising the intellectual. And with the development of man's

mind there was also developing a fuller kinship with God. The honor and glory with which man was crowned in the days of our psalm may seem to be of slight value compared to the glory and honor that man has received from God since then—but the psalmist made his comparison with his earlier days, and his conclusion was fully as significant as are our own.

Estimating Values. The place which man holds in the scheme of things is as varied as the knowledge which he possesses. The cow may have an equal importance with a playmate in the eyes of a little child. Only added years and increased knowledge makes possible a correct differentiation. It is so with all things and all people. And men as a race were children once. What we call the lower animals—

> **"All sheep and oxen,**
> **Yea, and the beasts of the field,**
> **The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,"**

stood on the same plane with man to our primitive ancestors. But as century succeeded century man's knowledge increased. As knowledge increased and man grasped its significance he revised the relative values that he placed on things. His attitude toward the world and all that it contains changed. He saw a difference between mere animals and himself. This new viewpoint helped him to become the master of the creatures round about him. He began to discover himself and to estimate more accurately his place in the universe. And by the psalmist's time man stands preeminently master of all other animate beings. The psalmist goes even further than this. He finds in God the reason for man's supremacy. "Thou hast made him but little lower than God," he softly whispered. What did the psalmist mean? David's God was akin to the God of the twenty-third psalm, the God Jehovah whom Israel knew in that day. Therefore man was a creature of dignity and worth, reverencing a God mighty enough to shape in flesh and blood a race with character possibilities like his own. God has been the same throughout the ages. But back in the days of the childhood of the race, men thought

of God and understood him as children do. As the race has matured and man's mind has matured with its ever increasing knowledge as the result of the great variety of human experience, God has become a vastly different Being. What has happened in our day to throw back parts of the race to savagery and paganism, having little reverence for God and none for a human being?

Among Ourselves

Our Starry Heavens. The Creator of the starry heavens into which the psalmist gazed was great and powerful and worthy. How much more so is he when we consider the starry heavens of our own meditation? Within the last few years a larger view of the heavens has been secured. By means of a new process with stronger lenses than had heretofore been used some sixty thousand stars never before known have been caught upon a photographic plate. This gives to the world a larger conception of the magnitude of the universe. It pushes the boundaries of the knowledge of the heavens out millions of miles. It makes necessary a readjustment of many notions in astronomy. With a great hundred-inch lens, three times larger than any used before it was made, the astronomer expects to make our evening walk among the stars a new one altogether. It is a long journey in thought from an earth stretched flat with a heaven domed over it to the earth which we know to-day, humbly whirling on its axis as it swings year by year about the sun. A very minor body among the great is our earth, and our knowledge that it is so gives an added intensity to the wonder of the psalmist when, gazing out into the night from his hilltop vantage point, he cried:

> **"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,**
> **The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;**
> **What is man, that thou art mindful of him?**
> **And the son of man, that thou visitest him?**
> **For thou hast made him but little lower than God,**
> **And crownest him with glory and honor."**

Our wonder grows as we realize not only that the universe is so beyond our grasp, but also that the spiritual kingdom of the Creator of all, of which we are a part through being

made in his own image, is greater in extent and power and possibilities than our creeds and prayers ever credit.

A New Revelation of God. The psalmist's conception of God falls much below ours of to-day. The years have added to man's knowledge of God. Now and then there has lived a man who ventured beyond his fellows and caught a closer glimpse of his Maker. This he reflected to those of his time, and they tried being Godlike. But at best it was a poor conception of God that man had until Jesus Christ walked upon earth. He put the generalizations of the learned into the concrete forms of common life. His ministry drew God from the skies to the marketplace, the field, and the home. Reverence for God came to be based not only on the wonders of the universe, but also on the power of his Spirit in human lives. The spiritual universe became real in the manifested practice of its principles among men. The revelation which Jesus gave of God and of life's realities was as undreamed of when Hebrew psalmists sang as were the new-found stars along the milky way. People to-day seek the majesty and goodness of God in the lives of those who have had fellowship with Christ. Their questions of theology are answered in the attitude of Christians in business deals. They find the argument for or against Christianity in their next-door neighbor. In the place of a creed to recite they seek a life to live. And the new revelation of God in Jesus Christ makes it possible for them to find God through men and women whose spirit as well as name is Christian. The clear reflecting of the spirit of Jesus Christ dispels all desire for argument and inspires to that state of mind which prays,

> **"Just as I am, without one plea,**
> **But that thy blood was shed for me,**
> **And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,**
> **O Lamb of God, I come."**

Acquired Honor and Glory. Honor and glory because of God's goodness to men does not satisfy live folks of to-day. Biology has taught man how he is made and has given to him more adequate knowledge for the care and use of his body. Psychology has surveyed the mind and

laid bare the secrets of intellectual progress. The physical sciences have placed in the hands of man power almost unbelievable. He stands not merely preeminent among the animate creations of God, he is also master of the inanimate. He gives life to the slumbering powers of earth and sky, and controls them for his daily use, comfort, and happiness. Yet, with all this, he craves that honor which fellowship with God alone can give. A larger vision fills the meditation of the watcher of the stars to-day than the psalmist knew. He has seen the God of man and things through the intimate eyes of Jesus Christ. And in that new vital knowledge he has caught a fresh sense of the worthiness of God to the profoundest reverence. For fellowship with Jesus Christ gives a new viewpoint for appraising God's power and love and man's relationship to him. As man comes to view himself in the light of this larger relationship his reverence for God increases. And that which is the greatest element in inspiring reverence for God is man's own knowledge of the power of God of developing through Christ that image in which he himself is born—such a likeness to God that it is recognized by his brother men.

Some Questions to Think About

What is the basis for reverence?

What have reverence for man and God in common?

In what way did the psalmist express his reverence for God?

How did the ancient conception of the universe influence the way in which he expressed it?

How has increased knowledge brought fuller content to the psalmist's song?

To what extent does our conception of God enrich life more fully than that of the psalmist?

How does man acquire his important place in the universe?

How does Jesus's revelation of "the Father" affect our conception of God?

What part have we in developing reverence for God in those who know not fellowship with Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER III

A SENSE OF GOD'S BOUNTIFUL CARE

ADDITIONAL READING, PSALM 145

The Twenty-Third Psalm

"Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever."

A Shepherd's Meditations

Goat Philosophy. The goat element in a man predominates in the atmosphere of modern life. Pushed by the ceaseless round of business, patriotic demands and social duties, he plunges forward day after day breaking open pathways into pastures he knows not. The idea of leadership leaves little opportunity for thoughts of being led. "He wins who puts it over," is the prevailing slogan. The result is too often a browsing in the vacant lots of intellect and emotion where discarded garments predominate over that which might nourish a soul. The wild forcing one's way to a place ahead of one's fellows frequently leads to

an isolation and loneliness of life that cries out for some voice to guide. And in the experiences of life which demonstrate the human limitations of the most efficient there is a yearning to be led as a sheep by a shepherd, to have a care manifested for the needs which goat philosophy fails to provide. It is at such times that the shepherd's psalm sings itself into the heart with a new tune—the quiet, assuring tune used by a mother to lull her child to sleep.

Why Not Sheep? Out on the open hillside the psalmist's joy in God as his shepherd becomes concrete. Here the dangers to the flock and the need of the sheep are apparent. The watchful shepherd with his unwearying care of his charges becomes a figure of importance. The poetic relationship between shepherd and sheep suddenly becomes real. The song is from a page of life. The ministry of a man who knows the needs of those who trust in him looms up as a part of the scheme of things. The ninety and nine and the one lost lamb cease to be parable and exist as fact. There is a strange new significance in the idea of a Good Shepherd. We recognize the glory of just being sheep and, with the psalmist, cry most reverently: "I need a shepherd. My shepherd is Jehovah, God."

A Page from a Shepherd's Meditations. The long days and nights on the hills of Palestine had been more than hours of wage-earning to the singer of our psalm. Like all great poetry, his song grew out of a life of service. And out of the service which he had rendered to the sheep had come a great reward. The task which he had done so faithfully had enlarged his vision. The battles with the beasts that had sought food from his flock had endeared the flock to him. The searching for tender grass and sweet, cool springs had emphasized to him the helplessness of his dumb charges. The foolish straying from the paths of safety had taught him how much they needed a guide. And the bruises and the scratches and the frequent rescue from certain death dignified his importance in the lives of the sheep who knew not how well they were being watched over and protected. With his flock asleep he

studied the heavens and thought upon his experiences. Did not the sheep, whether they knew it or not, need a shepherd? Must not a shepherd, to be of actual service, know and understand his sheep? They were a foolish flock. Until they learned his voice and became accustomed to his ways they were hard to lead. Time and patience counted, though. After the weeks they trusted him and trailed along after him. To him they looked for food and water. They seemed to know that he would lead them to some cool spot for rest when the midday sun burned hot. And he knew his sheep. How like his God, this shepherding! What more natural, then, that he be fired with a new vision of Jehovah—a God to whom his people were as sheep of a trusty shepherd?

A Light in the East. Day breaks with added glory in human experience when one awakens to a new life-relationship. Everything takes on new significance. Things past gain fresh interpretation. Future hopes lay hold of greater possibilities. Life centers around a new point. The recognizing of the similarity in relationship between God and the psalmist and the shepherd and his sheep explained many things to the happy singer. Suddenly he realized how constant is God's care. With assurance he could say, "I shall not want." For if he would go to any extreme of danger for the sake of his flock, would not God do as much for him? "Jehovah is my shepherd." What a new meaning to life! What a point around which to center life's hopes and fears, its ambitions and perplexities, its joys and sorrows! Across the horizon a new figure stood silhouetted. The skyline had become animate. Could it be that man might follow a Shepherd's call as did his sheep?

The Shepherding of God. Wisdom, strength, and authority are essential to genuine leadership, whether it be of sheep or men. Wise men are needed to plan, to counsel, and to guide. Strong men are necessary to stand the storm. Such strength is not merely the ability to withstand the storm oneself. There is the larger need of bringing the flock of people safely through, their trust but temporarily shaken, firm and sure. Of such a character

is the shepherding of God. The psalmist puts it in terms of his own experience. Pastures green with needed nourishment are provided. Waters for refreshment and rest are sought out when the strife grows too intense. Out into the complex roads of life the Shepherd leads the tired soul. One does not have to seek the way alone. The Shepherd guides. Moral and spiritual discernment is not very keen when one seeks the way of life without a guide. The way appears not always to be a traveled path to him who sees it for the first time. He fain would hesitate for fear the Shepherd blunder and lead astray. And that would be bad for the traveler. But the psalmist does not stop at the thought of what the Shepherd's failure might mean to the traveler. To the psalmist's mind failure means more to the Shepherd than to the traveler. Long since the God of Israel had declared:

"Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."

He knows the paths of righteousness which he himself has made. And to prove himself such as he has declared himself to be, he will lead men in the paths of peace.

"The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his,
And he is mine forever."

Sheep Experience

Just Sheep. It is inconceivable to-day that God should have any other attitude toward the well-being of man than that indicated by Jesus in his parable of the lost sheep. God made man in his own image. He gave to him the capacity for possessing those qualities of life which have made beautiful the lives of those who have carefully observed the laws of the highest human development. The wise life of a righteous man is a vindication of his creation.

But God did not make him an automaton. In the capacity involved in "the image of God" he left a real need for divine care and guidance. When man wanders away it is this need that ultimately proves to be the point of contact by means of which God brings him back. Before this point of contact is reached, however, God seeks for weary hours. And this not that he may locate the man or woman who has wandered, but that he may so adjust the multitude of circumstances that approach may be possible to the heart of the individual. Jesus was doing this very thing when the Jews raised an objection. Had they given the matter a little unprejudiced thought, they would have recalled the fact that their own Scriptures, the Old Testament, both showed the significance of human life and gave utterance to the people's avowed recognition of Jehovah as their Shepherd, and as a Shepherd, too, who was owner as well.

Bypaths and Pitfalls. The stretch of the pathway of life seen at any one time is very short. Fair traveling suddenly runs into almost impassable territory, and a hard, rocky bit of the journey frequently opens into delightful vistas of easy going. The blinding dust and burning sweat of a desert mile ends in an oasis of rest and comfort. The uncertainty of the way leads to overassurance of a knowledge of it. A few good guesses develop dangerous self-confidence. Physical satisfaction is sought in fields whose yield is poisonous. Mental excursions into attractive bypaths shut out from sight the faithful Guide. And religious experiments pitch us headlong into pits from which we are lifted through the humiliation of contrition and forgiveness. The "blazings" of some men lead other men astray long after those who marked the way are once more safely on the high road. It is no poetic fancy that finds expression in the psalmist's song. That God leads implies the need of leading. The decision of life-plans is often unwisely made because of failure to recognize God's will. Business deals go to smash when the righteousness of God is ignored. Hearts break with grief if the comfort and guidance of God are overlooked. Human sheep need the same wise shepherding that all sheep need to have. This

the singer of later years knew well when he added to the psalmist's utterance the experience of the ages:

> "He leadeth me! O blessed thought!
> O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
> Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
> Still 'tis God's hand that guideth me."

The Psalm in Life. All ages find help and comfort in the shepherd's psalm. From childhood on to old age it gives the message that is timely and fit. As the years increase the psalm gathers to itself all the rich experiences of one's life, to give them back with new and finer meaning as each need arises. And it takes years of experience to grasp fully its deepest significance and joy. Two little boys—one three, one five—one day were taught the psalm in Sunday school. And they understood it as well as boys of their age were capable. They went home and brought out the red Noah's ark. Quickly sorting out the crude wooden animals, they selected two with cotton pasted on them. These were the sheep of the day's lesson. The green rug was the pasture. The black iron register was the still water. Their exposition of the psalm was true to their own life-experience. And to that experience it ministered. The boys grew to manhood. They married, built homes, and had children. Then, in the prime of life, fatal illness struck down the younger brother. The last night was passed by these two men together. The one, strong and vigorous, sat by the bed on which the other lay wasted and weak. They talked of those things of which brothers talk at such a time. And then they talked of the twenty-third psalm. But the psalm did not speak to them of toy sheep that night. They had lived many years and had gone through varied experiences since they first heard its message. They had grown to be men. And the psalm had grown with them. Its message on this last night together before the one should know the meaning of the shepherding and the other should wait and wonder, was:

> "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
> I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
> Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

They had followed the Shepherd on the hills and through the valleys. They had found him bountiful in his care through the experiences which they understood in part. Now they trusted him fully for that part of the journey which went down through a path known only to those who had traversed it—and to the Guide. For they felt assured that He would lead to fields beyond the thought of human mind.

The Valley of Fear. Every life has its valley of fear. And it is not always the valley of the shadow of death, for to countless thousands the open tomb and the risen Christ have forever dispelled the shadow of that valley. But there remains to many even of these the fear of the tragedies of life: sorrow, misfortune, broken homes, shattered ambitions, ruined health, years of physical suffering and agony. There is also the valley which spiritual cowardice dreads. To those obsessed with this fear comes the unwillingness to venture into larger experiences, lest, perchance, the foothold already secured be lost. The possibility of God's failure to come up to the faith which would send them on into a fuller joy of life forever holds them back. They dread a separation from God which might result from testing the experimental opportunities of the spiritual life. Such valleys of fear are present constantly. The consequence is a halting life that makes but little progress. It is unable to leave that which it possesses for the larger possibilities of that which it might obtain. But to those who know the Guide in whom the shepherd trusted there is no such fear. They go forward with Robert Browning, singing,

> "Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
> the throe!"

Being Shepherded. As one reads the experience described in the twenty-third psalm his whole nature yearns for the joy of its writer, and he forthwith declares that

he too will have that psalm written large in his life. The thought of Jehovah's watching over him, providing for his wants, protecting him in time of trouble, relieving him in seasons of distress, makes a strong appeal. And well it may. For who would not share in the ancient poet's sense of utter dependence upon One able to do all things? But being shepherded demands more than all this. It has in its very nature claims upon the one shepherded. One must be known as a member of the flock. He may not live his Christian life unrelated to his fellow Christians. He must partake of such food as seems wise in the mind of the Shepherd. He must be willing to be led where pastures are green and waters quiet and refreshing. Straight paths must become a desire. Compromise and side-stepping moral issues must cease. He must yield to all that soul restoration implies. Life must respond with concrete doing of things by a different rule. The deep experiences of the valley must be gone through with a sheep's implicit confidence in the shepherd. He must permit the Shepherd's touch as he seeks the bruises which need anointing. These sins, excused on the ground of temperament, must be probed. The keen satisfaction of having the Shepherd know and participate in the whole life must be the exhilarating impulse of each day's living. Under these conditions, could there be greater joy imaginable than the consciousness of being led daily according to the best that God can plan? Yet the fullness of this joy the psalmist only faintly visioned. He tuned his harp at too early a day. But to us is the full strong chord struck by Jesus, who said, "I am the Good Shepherd." For he leads his sheep not only "to dwell in the house of Jehovah," but straight into the presence of God. And that they may arrive safely, he lays down his life for them.

"Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

And he helps his sheep make music like his own.

Guests of God. There is great joy in being the guest

of another. Everyone has this experience at times. But who can estimate the full satisfaction of being the guest of God? For such are all who know the deeper meanings of this wonderful psalm. Life at its best, if it is lived in a positive manner, meets oppositions, makes enemies, and develops a need of the protecting care and comfort that God alone can give. To such a host we come at the close of the day. Tired and distracted with the toil and problems of life, it is God whose communion with us brings rest and peace. He gives to us the spiritual hospitality which our souls crave. There is no need of ours to which he will not minister. And as day follows day, and we find his ministry to our personal needs unfailing, we are more than ever constrained to repeat with the psalmist:

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever."

Some Questions to Think About

To what extent does goat philosophy prevail among men?

In what sense have all men and women the sheep instinct?

How came the psalmist to think of God as his shepherd?

What are some of the things which the shepherd relationship implies?

State some of the ways in which God leads men. When? Where?

How far does our own experience parallel that of the psalmist?

Why is the wise life of a righteous man a vindication of his creation?

What capacity for likeness to himself did God give to men?

In what ways has man weakened his ability to appropriate all this endowment?

What danger do we run of being overconfident in our knowledge of life's pathway?

How does the content of the twenty-third psalm deepen as we grow older?

From what fears besides the fear of death does God relieve us?

Cite the obligations of one who is shepherded by God.

How may we become and ever remain the guests of God?

CHAPTER IV

COURAGE

The Twenty-Seventh Psalm

"Jehovah is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
Jehovah is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh,
Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.
Though a host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident.
One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after:
That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of Jehovah,
And to inquire in his temple.
For in the day of trouble he will keep me secretly in his pavilion:
In the covert of his tabernacle will he hide me;
He will lift me up upon a rock.
And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me;
And I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Jehovah.

"Hear, O Jehovah, when I cry with my voice:
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.
Hide not thy face from me;
Put not thy servant away in anger:
Thou hast been my help;
Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then Jehovah will take me up.
Teach me thy way, O Jehovah;
And lead me in a plain path,
Because of mine enemies.

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries:
For false witnesses are risen up against me,
And such as breathe out cruelty.
I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah
In the land of the living.
Wait for Jehovah:
Be strong, and let thy heart take courage;
Yea, wait thou for Jehovah."

The Path to Courage

Who Is Courageous? The school bully is the courageous fellow to the undiscriminating thought of boyhood. Who, like him, is able to bluster and swagger before his fear-smitten comrades? Only the later years bring a distinction between him and the smaller lad who really dared an uneven battle. With this knowledge comes the realization that there are also intellectual and spiritual bullies. Not all that passes for courage has the earmarks of genuineness. That quality of mind which enables one to encounter dangers and meet difficulties with a firmness of spirit, free from fear, alone deserves the name. This excludes the wild feats of the foolhardy as well as the bully's ill performed acts. There is a background which gives courage to the courageous. Neither the bully nor the foolhardy have this. The one uses his overestimated strength to cow others, the other often seeks the spotlight through a bit of opportunism.

That man is morally courageous who knocks down another larger than himself because of an insult to womanhood. His ideals give him a strength which his arm does not possess. He uses what he has in a noble cause. He who pioneers for some new thought at a time when it is a generation too early for his contemporaries shows intellectual courage. The earth would still be regarded as flat had he failed to come along. It is his sort who gave our fathers the light which we use to cheer the pioneers of to-day. The prophets belonged to his order. So did the Christ. Spiritual courage plunges through the limitations of a formal church out into the plains where men are privileged to walk with God. It makes doors into such a

church, through which the foreigner and ignorant may enter.

A knowledge of what they possess physically, intellectually, and spiritually backs men of this fiber. And to men like these the psalmist was a comrade. "Whom shall I fear?" he cries, and, "Of whom shall I be afraid?" No braggart was he, rolling up his sleeves to meet all comers. He met them, though, when they came. He was a man conscious of his own limitations and aware of the source of strength which he needed in addition to what he possessed. All that he had he staked on the promises of God and his own experience with him.

Where Do They Get It? Quality of character cannot be purchased at the five-and-ten-cent store. Courage is not a bargain-counter offering. Physical courage is often due to a feeling of dependence upon the human machine to do what one wills. A feeling of fitness, having its source in care of the body and training in the use of one's hands, has brought this about. Intellectual courage has its basis in a conviction of the individual that truth is greater than what men think about truth. This accounts for a Luther nailing up protests at variance with the thought of his time. It also explains the man who prefers being in the minority, politically or religiously, rather than standing pat with those able to grant preferment. It is he who smashes machines and is branded an outlaw. The old order has no use for such.

Spiritual courage is developed in personal experience with God. It knows to what other men have attained in spiritual life. It has an accumulation of personal evidence on the subject. It dares to accept God in full on the basis of knowledge and experience. This makes it hard for the man who has no knowledge of what God has done for men and little or no personal experience in the matter to understand a life marked by spiritual courage. Against all forms of courage those who lack it rave. Failing to recognize the validity of its source, they sneer at it. Unwilling to pay the price of its attainment, they wave it aside as something not worth while. The result is disastrous. It gives us not only a multitude of physical cowards,

for whom we can often find excuse; it also gives us the intellectual and spiritual cowards who too often veil their cowardice behind a camouflage of conservatism and orthodoxy. One man courageous, no matter what it cost, is worth a multitude of cowards who obstruct the path of progress.

Where the Psalmist Learned the Secret. Those who wrote the Psalms did not look on life with sour expression. Somehow the pictured saints always impress us as having lost the zest of life. We err at this point. They shivered in the cold and perspired in the heat. Their songs, for the most part, are buoyant with life, red-blooded life that will arm for battle and slay the enemy while a song of praise to Jehovah-God is on their lips. It is unfair to compare these men with those whom the wits call "sisters" to-day. The days of the psalmists were frequently filled with the alarms of war. Fathers and sons were summoned to leave home and fight then as now. The soldiers of Israel were a busy lot of men. Those who came as plunderers had to be conquered. The enemy eager to annex a section of land needed alert attention. They had to sally forth against attack from all sides. They thought in terms of war. Our day has learned a new vocabulary, the vocabulary of military equipment, tactics, and maneuvers, the terminology of the sea, the air, the trench. Hatred of a despicable foe has woven itself into the songs of the people. Shortly we shall be able to stand by the psalmist's side and understand what he says. Even his conception of Jehovah was that of a "warrior-God." Not "an idol made of mud" to offer war-prayers to, but a God mighty in battle.

The courage of the psalmist has all this back of it. Why fear, with Jehovah at hand to scatter trouble's darkness and to act as a defense against all assaults? If enemies rush upon him like wild beasts, why show fear? So convinced is he of the practical backing of Jehovah that an army hurled across his path would not disturb him? Vain boaster? No. He based his conviction on a faith that had never been betrayed. Unlike some who would turn the world upside down in order to demonstrate

their ability to do it, he chants his song of courage against a day that may come without his seeking. Simplicity of faith like this defies the world. Some years ago in Hartford, Connecticut, Arba Langton, a man of simple faith, hung a sign outside of a little mission which he conducted. It read, "The sword of the Lord and Langton." His was a life of courage akin to the psalmist. He knew what a man can do when God is his fellow worker in every task of life. Simplicity of life, a knowledge of God's ways, fellowship with Jehovah—the secret itself is simple; to possess it demands a man.

Where Courage Wields Its Power

Interviewing An Ancient. There was no reporter from a Jerusalem "daily" to interview the psalmist in order to write him up, give his history to the people, and explain how he came to write the psalm. That is left for those who read his song to-day. We are able to interview him through the psalm itself. Poetlike, he sings himself into his lines. He makes clear that the confidence of which his courage is the expression is the cause of his thanksgiving to Jehovah. Yes, he would spend much time with God. Busy? Decidedly so. A living to earn, a family to support, the state to preserve, the church to maintain, battles to fight. Quite busy. But, you see, trouble mixes up with all of these routine matters of a day. And in trouble Jehovah will shield him as one is sheltered from heat and storm. Why not learn Jehovah's ways? Moreover, in the sterner strifes of life Jehovah will stand about him as an impregnable fortress.

How satisfyingly human was the psalmist! He sang a song because experience had written the words and music. Later, when the outlook is dark and foreboding, he uses his former confidence to strengthen his weakened faith. Not that he boasted of what he used to be able to do. He reviewed what Jehovah had done for him. In so doing he made the courage of the blue-sky days become the courage of the days when courage sources seemed cut off. How does he differ from folks to-day? Not much. Only the

generation rushing pell-mell where they know not, give a scant glance to those who, like the psalmist, fortify their hours of trouble with the courage of the days when youth helped all to run well. The psalmist's neighbors treated him the same way. But he did not care. Neither do those of to-day who are like-minded.

Courage Grafters. Small men seek courage for personal ends. If they acquire a little courage, it usually makes them bullies of one sort or another. If it does not, it sets them to swelling up their muscles for the admiration and intimidation of those less ostentatious. The psalmist sought personal courage. It became a part of his individual development. But he did not desire it in order that his name might appear in Who's Who. He considered his enemies to be the enemies of Jehovah, and Jehovah's enemies his own. Therefore courage to him became an instrument in destroying those who opposed his God. He justified his use of courage by the conceptions of his time. In his use of it for Jehovah he rendered service to his fellow man. He was almost modern in his practice at this point. The emphasis on war sets him back a bit, as it has some folks to-day. Our conception of God and man does away with our justifying the use of God-given courage for personal ends. The doctrine of *noblesse oblige* calls for the giving of strength to the weak by the strong. Iron-muscled men have little patience with physical weaklings until they feel grateful for a perfect body. Those possessed of courage to think ahead of their fellows fret at the lagging procession of dullards. And those who have dared to meet God with a pure heart are in danger of becoming self-righteous as they see the multitude discussing ways and means of approaching God. When courage fails to see visions for those less endowed, when it grows peevish over the lesser attainments and falterings of others, the danger signal is set at the next switch.

"Help Wanted." The kingdom of God has large need of courageous men and women. One of its foundations is "love and service for others." What a large use of courage can be made on this platform. To fight the liquor traffic in the face of physical danger is courageous. When we

stand by our well-thought-out convictions concerning the value of hygiene in the tenement district, despite the cry that the people love dirt and disease, courage is necessary. To order out vicious tenants found using our property for immoral or vicious purposes demands both courage and sacrifice. To put into practice our preaching that girls who work should be paid a wage sufficient to give them independence hits our courage where the dollars speak. A lack of courage here, however, neutralizes the efforts of Christian men and women to lead folks to Jesus Christ. Sufficient spiritual courage is necessary to practice the teachings of the Kingdom before there will be any great rush for entrance on the part of those outside. The Kingdom has the sign hung out, "Help wanted." Why do we wait to take it down? Is it courage that we lack? There is plenty of it available.

Preparedness

For the Dark Days. Preparedness is no new doctrine. Its uniqueness is in the fact that so few people recognize its value until too late. The admonitions and encouragements of the aged should inspire those who in youth accept life's burdens, for preparedness means the doing of necessary and frequently difficult tasks when the rest of the world is at play. Relatively small is the number of those found ready for the emergencies either of misfortune or opportunity. Recognizing no possible opportunity, they fail also to accept the experiences of others as an indication of the universality of misfortune or sorrow. A clear-cut knowledge of God is a necessity when the stress of life is great. In the days of adversity the psalmist recalls that when Jehovah urged that he seek him, he obeyed. This gave him courage to endure. "Thou hast been my help." What if he is as friendless and forsaken as a deserted child, Jehovah will care for him. Those who have never experienced spiritual loneliness cannot sympathize with this mood of a man in distress. Such as have, however, take the same way out that he did. "Teach me thy ways"; "lead me in a plain path." He would have everything out in the

open. The fear of false friends and enemies who purred over him in the guise of sympathizers troubled him. The psalmist dwelt among folks of the sort who discredit by faint praise. He knew the sleek, suave "brother" who knew all the hurtful things to say to all who would listen. This sort of comment about a man eats at the heart like a canker. Surely the man needed a faith that God's goodness was to be shown to him in this life. But the faith which gave him courage would have been lacking had he listened to those who had no time for the fellowship with God which was his delight.

Concerning That Fellowship. One comes to know God only through fellowship with him. Life failures strewn along the path of the ages testify to that. And the men and women who have walked with courage through almost impossible experiences witness to the accessibility of God for this fellowship. A great number of books are written to-day on "How"—"How to cook," "How to swim," "How to live on seventeen cents a day." The bookstalls are full of them. But who shall write the books on "How to have fellowship with God"? No modern scribe can do this better than it has already been done. The pages of "The World's Best Seller" fairly bristle with suggestions. Why go outside of the Bible for the way? "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," Jesus said in response to a query from one of his disciples. One method by which he made his saying concrete was to know the Scriptures. One must know about God before he can know God. This does not mean a fantastic use of Scripture or the selection of a verse at random. It means an intelligent study of the Bible and about the Bible. Jesus also prayed. Prayer was intimate communion with God as Jesus used it. Only the baring of one's personality brings a similar response from another. Constant watchfulness to live Christlike soon results in a new meaning to the phrase, "Our Father." Impatient for quick results, too often a short cut is tried. It always leads to a dead wall, where one must turn back. Our eagerness never hurries God, but our earnestness impresses him. Delayed blessings may be due to failure on our part

to follow the Guide. Are we as anxious to do the things he wants us to do as we are to have him do the things which we want done? Fellowship with God is a certainty, but it comes by the way of the cross.

Arms or the Man? In the hour of apparent defeat the real man stands forth. Ordinary victory gives no fair criterion of a soldier. The hard months in the trenches have shown the sort of stuff of which armies are made. The psalmist would have made good with the Allies at the front. When his sword broke he did not throw it away and skulk to the rear. Instead "he believed to see the goodness of Jehovah" and fought a victorious fight with his broken weapon. By so doing he won a victory twice: once over his difficulties and once over himself. The courageous fighter in life's battles—those common things of every day—is doing what this Israelite did. The Kingdom is advanced by men like him. No greater and no less were his opportunities than ours. Weapons do not decide a conflict. The real fight is with the man himself. And the testing question continually is, "Am I simply a craven or a strong, courageous knight?" Let us then be "Knights of the Spirit."

Some Questions to Think About

Compare courage and foolhardiness.
How is ordinary courage developed?
How did the psalmist become courageous?
What is the significance for life of intellectual courage?
Where do we find courageous people?
How does spiritual bullying manifest itself?
Cite some instances of courage.
How does the doctrine of "preparedness" enter into the life of the courageous?
In what places is Christian courage needed to-day?
What is God-given courage?
How does one acquire it?

CHAPTER V

THE PATHOS OF LIFE

ADDITIONAL READING, PSALM 90

The Thirty-Ninth Psalm

"I said, I will take heed to my ways,
That I sin not with my tongue:
I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
While the wicked is before me.
I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good;
And my sorrow was stirred.
My heart was hot within me;
While I was musing the fire burned;
Then spake I with my tongue:
Jehovah, make me to know mine end,
And the measure of my days, what it is;
Let me know how frail I am.
Behold, thou hast made my days *as* hand-breadths;
And my life-time is as nothing before thee:
Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.
Surely every man walketh in a vain show;
Surely they are disquieted in vain:
He heapeth up *riches* and knoweth not who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what wait I for?
My hope is in thee.
Deliver me from all my transgressions:
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
I was dumb, I opened not my mouth;
Because thou didst it.
Remove thy stroke away from me:
I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.
When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,
Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:
Surely every man is vanity.

"Hear my prayer, O Jehovah, and give ear unto my cry;
Hold not thy peace at my tears:
For I am a stranger with thee,
A sojourner, as all my fathers were.
Oh spare me, that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more."

Is It Worth the Candle?

Why Not Complain? Why not complain if we are sick and our neighbor is vigorous and strong? Especially if we have endeavored to live right, pay our debts, treat our neighbors with fairness and the world at large with justice, and our neighbor treats God as a byword and does none of those things expected of a good citizen. Why not? A good complaining eases the mind, gives vent to one's feelings, and lets everyone know that we are not unmindful of the injustice of our situation. The psalmist had excellent reason for taking this view of things. Sickness in his day was popularly regarded as proof of God's displeasure. It was an occasion for the scoffer to hurl his taunting jibes. Even the kindly disposed found cause to wag their head. Why not burst forth with counter jibe, recalling some undesirable event in their experience? A display of rage might at least drive away those who persisted in their unwelcome attentions. The argument would have been easy to yield to, since to ancient Israel sickness which resulted in death must be an indication of an interruption of fellowship with God. Our habit is to question God's love for us at such times. Or else we plaintively query, "What have we done to merit it?" The burden of our illness or the near approach of death too often drives us to the placing of responsibility upon God to whom, heretofore, we have given little if any consideration. Evidently, the psalmist had a goodly amount of well-trained will power. He resolved to be doubly careful of every word he uttered, every act he did. No one would trap him into murmuring against God. Of what value is faith, if not for times like this? It is difficult to imagine this sick man appearing in prayer meeting, week after week, reporting how he had failed to make good during the week gone by, but that he would make the next week a remarkable demonstration of his faith. He recognized the stubborn element in himself and harnessed his mouth as with a bridle. He controlled his tongue and kept from speaking with bitterness and cursings against his lot. He was sick, probably peevish, his mind a burning furnace of

fevered suggestions. Holding the current religious philosophy of his day, it was not easy to suffer severe illness. Happily, his practical religion outran his theory of truth, and he disappointed those who came around to see him break loose and rave. Somehow the reality of God possessed him. Like men of to-day who show remarkable Christian fortitude in times of crisis, he demonstrated that the restraining power of religion is not an idle phrase. Do we question in what way he would have sinned if he had complained against God? What do you say to-day when Christians complain of their lot?

The Philosophy of Silence as Practiced by the Psalmist. Constant repression of intense emotion reacts with bad results. The sick man of our study found "keeping his grievance on the inside of him" an aggravation to his sickness. His pulse grew more rapid and his respiration increased. He soon had to do something or collapse. Many a twentieth-century attempt to keep silent before the criticisms of friends and enemies has at last given way to some form of words. The result has often surprised those waiting for the breaking point to arrive. Like the leering Israelites who expected the psalmist to make a show of himself, modern tormentors have been disappointed. There are two ways which people use in trying to secure relief for wrought-up feelings. The user of violent oaths employs one way, the man of prayer the other. That the first method is a failure need not be said. Prayer leads the soul into the place where one's life is viewed as a unit in a great scheme of things the relationship of which must be understood in order to discover its significance. This is one of the practical values of prayer. "Why not philosophize a bit?" said the psalmist to himself. In communion with God we are able to face the fact that life, in its present form, must end some time for each of us. A man cannot live forever. Why not recognize the shortness of life? The fathers of to-day buried the fathers of yesterday. Why not be ready to take our place, in due time, in the caravan which presses on "to the pale realm of shade, where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death"? Sickness is a great handbook on profit-

able thinking concerning the brevity of life. The slowing down of machinery reveals every rattle due to worn-out parts, loosened bearings, and overstrain. With full speed on, it looks as though it might last forever, unoiled, unrepaired, unattended. What is life, after all? The psalmist spreads out the four fingers of his right hand. A handbreadth, the shortest measure he knew, compassed life when compared to eternity. No time available for useless things. Conservation of time and energy is a valuable asset here. The whole of life seems insignificant when viewed from a high attitude. Life itself appears cheap. Men are murdered, shot in battle, hung, electrocuted, killed by trains, commit suicide. What's the use? Why give special honor to any individual, whatever his position or wealth? Finally all go out, escorted by the undertaker. "Vain show" is right. Count the useless things done during life's brief span. Check up the needful and worthy things left undone. Every man, apparently, has a philosophy of his own concerning life worked out in the laboratory of his own pleasure. "Sick man's ravings?" Do you think so? Then recall your sick-bed meditations and the thoughts which have run through your mind as over the body of some loved one or friend a minister has said, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The revision of our thinking when in the lingering presence of death is oft-times as radical as it is wholesome.

Overlooked By-Products of Life

In the Test-tube of Experience. To claim that man's chief concern in life is getting and spending is to indicate a preference for the philosophy of the cave-man. The cosmic purpose is much larger than the mere perpetuation of life. We cast our thesis in ancient mold if we stop at that. The by-products of life are its real glory. In them do the richer values of living manifest themselves. They make the sunset more than a lurid ball of fire seen through a million particles of dust. They give to endeavor a high ideal. They make the body subservient to the aspirations of a mind fired by the possibilities of God. Otherwise, why struggle along with life? It is brief, full

of trouble and sickness, and ends in physical breakdown and death. Would it not be as well to order the physician to stop coming, dismiss the nurse, and throw the medicine out of the window? There must be something that makes life worth the living amid all its troubles and misfortune. Even those pious souls who sing "On Jordan's stormy bank I stand and cast a wistful eye," ask the minister to pray for their recovery when pneumonia has brought them face to face with death. Old earth seems to be a pretty good place to stay when leaving it becomes a near certainty. "My hope is in thee," sang the psalmist. And thereby he shouted aloud to the world that the spiritual nature which had developed within him while he did the common toil of life was something far more valuable than that which had occupied so much of his time. In the selection of the experiences which went into his life's making, those with God easily separated themselves as the most valuable. The struggle to secure a home and food and clothing in its high satisfaction was as nothing compared with these. Life's shadows were closing in on him. Life's last night had almost arrived. Material things, yes, even the children of his youth, would soon be shut out from him. His body would decay. But God lived. And he knew God. The going up to Jerusalem to be made a son of the law at the age of twelve, had been, perhaps, a perfunctory ceremonial. But the years of training at the feasts in the temple had made the ceremonial a living experience. The by-product of fellowship with Jehovah lifts high above the main stress of life. It foreshadows the challenge of a day then unborn, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

A Wise Prayer. Renewed strength for wasted limbs is not the burden of the sick man's prayer. Certainly he would be well if that were possible. He was human. But the consciousness of his fellowship with God made his sins loom up as mountain ranges when the fog lifts from the valley. Holding the view of his time, sin, to him, was the cause of his sickness. His prognosis of his own case gave him a bit of uneasiness. All the neighbors knew that he was sinful because he was sick. He did not want to

be the byword of those dominated by moral perversity. His silence in their presence he attributes to his own belief that God was responsible. Hence in the working out of God's will he would offer no complaint. He will not let anyone else know how he feels. Moreover, he acknowledges his sin. But he would like to have the ban lifted. The hand of God working as conscience eats away all the desirableness of man. Physically and mentally he is unfit. His beauty is consumed as is a coat in which the moth-grub feasts unseen. The stamp of man's frailty is seen most clearly here. Does the psalmist blame himself or God? Apparently himself, else he would not so eagerly seek for such a readjustment of his own inner life as he does. He seeks a deep inward peace.

Profitable Persistence. There are prayers made to which the petitioner expects no answer. He says his prayers. The sick man goaded by an unhappy conscience really prayed. He had been taught that there were three kinds of supplication, each, in a different way, superior to the other. Ordinary prayer was made in silence. The emotional nature might be stirred but little in such dignified petition. To cry aloud one's prayer indicated more concern over the object sought. To seek God's favor with tears indicated such burden of soul as necessitated an answer before rest could be enjoyed. All three methods are used in the extremity at hand. Restoration of health would do two things: give back the joy of living, and give evidence of the forgiveness of sin. Persistent prayer to God brings results. Through its process one comes to a fairer appraisal of the justice and wisdom of that for which he asks. This in turn adjusts the mind to accept the answer, whether favorable or unfavorable, as God's will and to say, "Thy will be done." There is no evidence that the psalmist recovered. There is, however, an eloquent witness to a nobility of soul that was satisfied to look to God for results. How does this compare with our conception and use of prayer?

Wayfarers

Immigrants. Life is frequently pictured as a pilgrim-

age; man, as a traveler. We are immigrants to earth. We shall emigrate from earth's shores. Aliens and strangers, we strive to learn the essentials of life-citizenship that we may pass the examination on the way out. A sojourner was the psalmist. The word suggests temporary residence dependent on the good will of the owner. God owns the earth; hence man is a tenant, a "stranger," a "sojourner." As strangers were cared for by Israel, so the psalmist would ask clemency from God. How far do we look up to God with this conception? Or have we caught the spirit of a later teaching? Are we looking beyond this life for reality? The end of things came with death to the psalmist. The frailty of life and the uselessness of its vanities filled the sunset with a pitiful pathos. He had not yet caught the vision of a life beyond. His cause for complaint, had he chosen to make it, could have been justified. Why should he not desire a bright sky for life's day, since its night was so dark and gloomy? Put in his place, one might almost chant with him the plaint of the wayfarer who sees nothing but gloom and discouragement in life, and the end a sort of rest, although an unsatisfactory rest at that:

"When down long lanes with weary feet
I trudge towards close of day,
I yearn to rest beside the stream
And breathe the new-mown hay.

"But ever must I hasten on,
Though rough the path, and get
What scanty joy the journey gives,
For soon the sun will set,—

"And ere its glorious light withdraws
From all that life counts best,
I must be past the shadow'd vale,
Across the ford, at rest."

Life's Pathos. The pathos of life is not in its brevity or its troubles. It is in the lamentable fact that so many do not see what might be until too late. Busied with non-essentials, we rush through life laying aside its real tasks for another day. This means that we shall have to say,

when old age grasps us by the hand, "There are so many left-over things I want to finish." There will also be a number of regrets to classify with the undone tasks. Old age is revered when along the path it has come it has left life brighter and easier for those who follow. The sunset lights the west with a message of hope, a psalm of welcome. Friends grieve at the going of one who has put content into friendship, neighborliness, good citizenship, and Christian character. The approaching night may find such a one weak and feeble. But the tolling of the bell in the steeple of the church at the corner vibrates with the satisfying echo of "Well done!"

Some Questions to Think About

What is life's real pathos?

How does psalm ninety throw light on psalm thirty-nine?

What was thought to be the relationship between sin and suffering?

How much of life is really worth while?

What is the reaction of complaining upon the complainer?

Of what value to-day is the psalmist's philosophy of silence?

In what way are people to-day like the psalmist's neighbors?

How does prayer help in time of trouble?

How does prayer help in time of joy?

Why is the wayfarer's philosophy unsatisfactory?

What sort of life gives consent to the final "Well done"?

CHAPTER VI

COMFORT IN SORROW

ADDITIONAL READINGS, PSALM 43

The Forty-Second Psalm

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me,
How I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holy-day.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And *why* art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance.

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
Therefore do I remember thee from the land of Jordan,
And the Hermons, from the hill Mizar.
Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterfalls:
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
Yet Jehovah will command his lovingkindness in the day-time;
And in the night his song shall be with me,
Even a prayer unto the God of my life.
I will say unto God my rock,
Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
As with a sword in my bones, mine adversaries reproach me,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the help of my countenance, and my God."

The Thirsty Populace

Life's Commonplaces. Like sin and suffering, sorrow knows no aristocracy. Its fingers mark the lines of experience upon the face of rich and poor. Nor is there any distinction made between saint and sinner. Sorrow meets everyone at the crossroads early, and thereafter appoints frequent trysting places along life's highway. There is nothing so common as sorrow. Both sin and suffering contribute to it from their boundless store. And goodness itself, nothing loth, helps to fill brimful the cup already nearly overflowing. Wiseacres and others not so wise have philosophized on the why of it all, but to no avail. Learned treatises have been written to show the inherent nature of this heritage in which all folks share. But going through sorrow is an experience to which academic discussions yield scant help. To the woman enduring the poignancy of sorrow which only women know, the "Cheer up, sister," of those who cannot know, is almost mockery. There is a lift, however, in the song of a man who has known sorrow of soul and yet found that which not only sustained him, but also held inviolate the integrity of his faith. In the fellowship of such a veteran in life's common heritage one takes courage. He looks about him to take fresh appraisal of the circumstances out of which his sorrow comes. He looks within himself to check up his own resisting powers against moodiness and despair. He seeks out one who has traveled the same road and asks for advice. He asks the advice because he needs it and wants it, but not until he thinks through the process by which the other man came out of the bogs, and not until he adopts the principles involved in the other man's coming through.

The Psalmist Offers a Suggestion. Antiquity of itself has nothing which commends it. Straight-back chairs or cord beds fail to woo us from the comfort of a porch-chair or a felt mattress just because these uncomfortable articles of furniture belonged to our great-grandfather's age. The method used by King Hiram's workmen, however, in moving the massive blocks of stone from the quarry to their place in Solomon's Temple, if it could be discovered, would

find a place alongside of modern physics, for it would fit those problems of life where material construction is going on. Thus the hoary antiquity we pass in traveling back to the psalmist does not cause us to think of him as ancient. He has a contribution for life to-day. He is modern. He is one of us. His problem of sorrow is our problem. And he would make a suggestion. The suggestion is that we endeavor to discover ourselves in our sorrow. The psalmist was not troubled by the physchologists. When he wrote his song of sorrow, God and his sorrow were uppermost in his mind. A captive, doubtless, up in the hill country of Dan or Cæsarea Philippi. Taunting enemies on all sides, a conscious fellowship with Jehovah within his soul, but the sight of impotent idol worship all about him, he surely had cause for sorrow. It was spiritual sorrow. He thought of the hart during the prolonged season of drought. Thirsty and distressed, the weary animal sought the brooks, that it might have relief. The psalmist remembered one of these poor creatures which he had seen. Its sides heaved with the anguish of its thirst. That illustrated the way he felt with reference to his separation from the house of the Lord. To his thirsty soul Jehovah was "the fountain of life," a living God as contrasted to the poor, useless substitutes to which his captors bowed down. Why could he not have been content with the religious satisfactions where he was? Why not? Ask the hart panting after the water brooks why a drink from the salty Dead Sea would not do as well as from a spring in the mountains. Ask of the bleeding soldier on distant battlefield crying out for nurse and surgeon why the suggestion of a good time in the near-by city when the battle is over will not satisfy. The psalmist, an alien prisoner where gods were worshiped who did not satisfy, wanted his God, Jehovah. This was his need. The lack of God's presence was the cause of his sorrow. As a sailor afloat on a life-raft for days without fresh water, so he thirsted. Has the need in your sorrow ever made God as necessary as that?

Received at Court. Modern church methods have not added anything to the ancient's conception of the signifi-

cance of appearing before God. Three times a year the Jews went up to Jerusalem to appear before God in the temple. The feast of the passover, the feast of harvest, and the feast of ingathering demanded of every male Jew his appearance in the temple. And each time were there the joyous psalms, the fellowship of devout pilgrims, the sacrifice, and the worship. An impression was made which, repeated three times annually, soon plowed a deep furrow into the mind. So in the loneliness of captivity the yearning for the sound of the temple musicians and the mystery of the temple itself predominates. Sorrow centers its longing on that which is dearest. In the temple the presence of God would be felt. While men stood in a hushed silence he would manifest himself. Then, as one refreshed by pure, cool water after a weary thirst, the soul rises to ecstatic joy and the life is reattuned. It was a great event. Received as royalty in the court of the great King! No wonder the psalmist sorrowed. The religion offered him by those who knew not his God was too shallow for consideration. Mayhap he had not appreciated his opportunities when available. Far be it from us of to-day to throw stones. Not only glass, but thin glass at that, is the house in which we live. While we may not attach as much significance as did the psalmist to the privilege of the presence of God, our opportunities are more varied and the fellowship offered is more real. We are accustomed to seek God's presence personally. Our admittance to his court is all our own. We ourselves must qualify "to see God." And more of us than the religious census enumerates are striving in one way or another to realize the presence of the Most High. Sorrow usually is the experience that helps us into the presence of God. We need comfort then, and somehow we look beyond the strength of human beings when our sorrow becomes acute. Regardless of creed, nearly all men long for God's presence when sorrow overtakes them.

The Good Old Days

Hard Luck Stories. Another man's discussion of his sorrow is to most of us a hard-luck story. Why should

he burden the world with the tale of what disturbs his life? Does he not know that every one has his share of sorrows? His tears are his own affair. We are accustomed to greet him with the expression, "I have troubles of my own; don't mention yours." But when the sorrow is our own it is a different story. Something unusual has occurred. The world should give heed. Perhaps the general scheme of the universe has slipped a cog. Possibly God has dropped out of the affairs of men. The advice which we offered to our neighbors seems inadequate for our own need. There is a reproach in the look of those whom we burden with our sorrow akin to the taunt hurled at the psalmist, "Where is he, if not at hand in the hour of sorrow?" For a time we are captive among the enemies. Our failure to take our own advice looks like an admission of its uselessness. The joyousness that has been ours makes the contrast of our present state of mind the more bitter. The psalmist "poured out his soul," for he conceived of his soul as a thing apart from his whole "self" and thought of it as acting upon his "self" from without. Our conception places the soul at the vital center of life. We become all "broken up" over our sorrow. With the singer we sit down to recount the good old days. He was accustomed to lead bands of happy pilgrims up to Jerusalem for the feasts. The songs of Zion had burst merrily from his lips. The joy that was overwhelms him as he recalls it. And out of the bitterness of his sorrow and the faith that is not yet spent he gains new strength. Notwithstanding all that is, he will yet praise God for the help which being in his presence gives.

"God's in His Heaven." In spite of a cloudy, drizzly Saturday the sun bursts forth in all of its glory on Sunday morning. Clear days for a long stretch dull the appreciation of the brightness of the sky. The misfortune of having drifted away from God is felt keenly in times of sorrow. God somehow is of more significance when apparently a bit out of reach. The clearing of the mind when sorrow breaks into tears stings to consciousness life as it really is. The coating of gayety, self-deception, and similar attempts at camouflage thin out and disappear, leaving the soul bare

and sensitive. The memory of days of fellowship with God comes as a smarting rebuke. The sorrow intensifies what faith might have wrought had the soul been true. The realization of this brings with it the difficulty of recognizing that our personal experience does not alter the truth of the mill-girl's song:

> "God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!"

When this fact is recognized, the way out of the hours of gloom and tears becomes more clearly outlined. When faith follows cheerfully the lead of God, the memory of former delights gives the needed strength to go through the "deep waters of the present." Has not the memory of God's goodness in other days made the garden of sorrow to blossom with lilies of hope? The long look, the corrective perspective, comes then. "A day is as a thousand years" and the events of the bitter hour do not make up the entirety of life.

Why Cast Down? A well-balanced life notes carefully the counters on both sides of the scales. Like the see-saw of childhood, life should be a series of adjustments in balancing. Sometimes we allow sorrow unduly to depress us. Is it out of order in these days of investigating commissions to project an inquiry into our own mental state? The analysis of our feelings often helps us to overcome them. At least it puts us in a position to know what must be mastered. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" was not an idle query to the psalmist or an extra phrase to fill a measure. It was a part of the process wherewith he was lifting himself out of the depths of his sorrow. It almost looks as though he had overestimated the weight of his sorrow. That bump when we stumbled up the stairs raised a tremendous cry, but mother's kiss put us quickly into the running again. Folks are much alike. The psalmist still had his hope in God. We have the promises of God as well as our past knowledge of his favor. "Job's Comforters" in times of sorrow are an encumbrance to the earth, as are those who hold a funeral service every time they visit the sick. Far more useful are those choice in-

dividuals who come in to find out the "why" of it all and then help us correct the causes. A bit brusque we find them sometimes, and not overwelcome. But who welcomes the stunning blow between the eyes that enables the life-guard to snatch us from the undertow and drag us safely to shore? Many of our "soul-cast-down" experiences are unnecessary. We see this for others. They see it for us. Why not become introspective enough to see it for ourselves? The battletorn soldier grows restive in his hospital cot. But not because of sorrow over his misfortune. No self-pity for him. His sorrow is all because he cannot at once return to the trenches and fierce bloody warfare. Psalmist-like, he has a hope. And it keeps him going until he is patched up again and fit for battle. Personal sorrows are minimized these days. The greater sorrow of a race at war has overshadowed all else. How great a boon just now is the way of the psalmist: "Why art thou cast down? Hope thou in God!"

The Way Out

"First Aid" for Sorrow. Sorrow feeds upon itself. If we are to expect the greatest help from God, we must start by using all the self-help of which we are capable. The writer of the forty-second psalm would doubtless have hesitated to give lectures on "Methods of Overcoming Sorrow." Yet his own experiences set forth in song present an efficient method. Unlike many an expert who presents theories which he has not proven, this singer of Israel makes his own sorrow lighten our pathway in similar experiences. The analyzing of our feelings is the first step. Can we find a cure for our sorrow if we do not determine its cause? This leads at once to a going over of what God has done for us in times past. This gives a basis for comparing our lot with the lot of others. And who yet has been willing to take up another's sorrow in the place of his own? The deaf grieve for the blind, and the blind pity the deaf. Each has acquired a philosophy which makes easier the handicapped journey. Both blind and deaf have realized the necessity of overcoming their feelings

in the matter. So must we. The heroism which they manifest drives us to the conclusion that we must pull ourselves out of our despair. Away from friends and loved ones, the psalmist listened to the torrents and eddies of the Jordan. To him they typified the flood of misfortunes which he thinks God is sending upon him. All troubles came from God, in his thinking, as well as all things good. He is overwhelmed.

"*Yet* Jehovah will command his lovingkindness in the daytime;
And in the night his song shall be with me,
***Even* a prayer unto the God of my life."**

It is a great thing to tell of sorrow when the final word is "victory." The telling shames the crowd who "enjoy being miserable," and their number is almost incalculable. Victory sounds in the psalmist's measures because he helped God to help him by doing all he could do by way of preparation.

Going to Headquarters. Many a battle has been lost because subordinates have failed to go to headquarters for guidance and plans. To take our sorrow to God and ask "Why?" in the spirit of "Thy will be done" is no easy task. It necessitates the laying aside of a critical attitude toward God. It involves a readiness to accept the result of the reasoning together. It means that we come perplexed, not demanding explanation. This was the psalmist's attitude. God was to him one who should protect him. Had God forgotten him? He would inquire and find out. A Jehovah worshiper ought not to be moping around at a disadvantage before taunting idol worshipers. Moreover, the process hurt; it was a sword in his bones, the seat of pain. To know one's God is able to deliver from trouble, and yet no relief appears, is a hard matter to explain to the scoffer. He would talk it over with God himself. O wise man of ancient time, who taught you the method of the Master? For so Jesus directed men to do. In his presence are comfort, help, and understanding. In the psalmist's resolution to go to headquarters with his sorrow is the prelude to our latter-day hymn:

"Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In his arms he'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there."

The Father's Knowledge. The child lacks the wisdom of his father. He thinks in terms of his own needs, while the father thinks in terms of the child's development. A man sounding forth the message of God once said: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55. 8, 9). Yet, as the presence of the father helps the child to become more like the father, so does a consciousness of the presence of God help us to think through our troubles from God's viewpoint. Especially is this true since Jesus Christ came into the world. We are apt to expect relief from sorrow too quickly. It takes time. Our entire nature has to recover from the shock. God knows this. He gives us the needed comfort and gradually leads us back to the normal experiences once more. Are we the same? No, not if we have put our faith absolutely in God. We are richer in experience, stronger in faith, and more abundant in our knowledge of his fatherly goodness. Our renewed praise of God begins before the dark clouds lift. As we emerge into the light of the day our soul is aglow with the sunrise of a steadfast purpose. Come what may in the to-morrows yet uncalendared, we will sing with the captive on Hermon:

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And *why* art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the help of my countenance, and my God."

Some Questions to Think About

What effect has sorrow on the mind? On the body? Can you prove that sorrow is common to all people?

How does the way we meet sorrow affect its influence on us?

Why do we cry out for God in time of sorrow?

In what way did Jesus minister to the sorrows of life?

What are some of the ways in which we may help ourselves in sorrow?

How does a consciousness of the presence of God help?

To what extent may we have that assurance of his presence?

In what sorrows have we found God a comfort?

How has our own experience enabled us to comfort others?

What demand does the sorrow of others make upon a Christian to know and understand the way out?

CHAPTER VII

GOD OUR REFUGE

ADDITIONAL READING, PSALM 139. 1-13

The Forty-Sixth Psalm

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountain be shaken into the heart of the seas;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof.
(Selah.)

"There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God will help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
Jehovah of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. (Selah.)

"Come, behold the works of Jehovah,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariots in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.
Jehovah of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. (Selah.)"

What About the Prophets?

Among the Jingoists. Wise ones who know past, present, and future are ever with us. The more ignorant they are the more insistent is their cry to be heard. Soap

boxes serve as their forums on innumerable street corners. Crowds with widely varying heart hunger listen to their prophecies with eager hope. Nor is their fraternity limited to the curbstone university. Throughout the life of any city they may be found in goodly numbers. Their dress is in accordance with their audience, their manner of speech akin to the society in which they move. But their message is practically the same. Everything economically is wrong. It is getting worse. Unless the oppressed rise up, the future will be unbearable. The nation is going to the dogs. Religion has lost its flavor. Dark, dismal, and full of despair are the days ahead. Frequently this type of prophet seeks popular notice by extreme statement. His message is not a fundamental conviction, the outcome of his life and thought. Like the gloomy individual who scatters gloom wherever he goes, the jingo prophets leave behind them a discontent without any remedy for it. Because of some defect in their own make-up they endeavor to "make the world bitter" for everyone with whom they come in contact. They are the "joy-killers" of the earth. From the beginning their brood has made the wheels of progress drag. Purely destructive in their viewpoint of men and things, opportunists for their own advantage, they hold at attention multitudes who otherwise would be on the march. The universe, man, God—everything is out of joint. They nail a placard with the legend "Icabod" on to the whole business and move on to a new soap box—after selling some printed copies of their speech.

Wholesome Isaiahs. Welcome the prophet of constructive progress! May his tribe increase. Man needs an uplift and outlook. He needs to know things which he can make count. He wants to know how he may fortify his future days, not merely how he can spoil those of others. He is hungry for a philosophy of life that is workable, that takes in other folks, himself, and God. If economic conditions are wrong, what can he do to right them? If he became a landowner, would he still encourage the soap-box oratory? The nation may be going down hill. If so, why? What is his contribution to the

saving of the situation? It is his nation, after all. And as for religion, he needs religion. If it is out at the elbows, where is the fault, with religion or with men? There are prophets who bring hope to men who question thus. How Isaiah of old answered the yearning of the noble spirits of his day in this respect! Of course everyone does not want a message that makes a demand upon the hearer, but among the crowd are those who listen to the way pointed out. These, like the Jews whose spirit is reflected in the psalm, give expression to their gratitude when the morning of realization dawns clear and bright. The optimistic brother who bases his hope on experience and vision and high ideals is a choice addition to any group of men. The prophet whose utterances are based on sound principles helps to readjust economic injustice, to stabilize the life of the nation, to revive religion from a death of dogma to a life of experience. The singer of our song was one of this forward-looking band. His is the spirit of Edward O'Shaughnessy when he sings:

"We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;

World losers and world forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world forever, it seems.

. . . . . .

One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown,
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down."

Stating a Proposition. No one has yet discovered a way of keeping poise in the midst of all sorts of disaster without strength other than his own. "Isles of safety" are needed by all. The psalmist rejoices in God as his refuge, and not only his, but the refuge of a city full of men, women, and children. What a city it was! Jerusalem, the center of the Jehovah worship. In the presence of an attacking enemy, here was safety. Why? The

presence of Jehovah was there. With him in the midst of the city and the people, what a ground of confidence was theirs! Jehovah has just proven himself "a very present help in trouble." After that demonstration of his protection, what if earthquakes do come, what if the nations of the earth do become embroiled in unimaginable conflict? "God is our refuge and strength." He will protect us and set things right. The psalmist sings in terms of community religion. It is national safety, national faith, national trust in God, in which the individual participates because he is blessed in being a unit in the community. Why fear with such solidity of belief? Why not rather say to posterity, "Link your community life up with God? You as individuals will then be buttressed by a hope and faith in God which is shared by all; God will then be able to bless you more abundantly than now you permit him."

By Way of Illustration

Our Home Town. The true citizen has a high estimate of his native town. No one is able to convince him differently. This conviction goes with him throughout life. The home town ever holds high place in our thought. Its way of paving the streets, its alertness in adopting electric lighting, its fine park, its excellent department stores, its noble institutions—why, there could not be a more perfect place to live. Its influence on our lives is mixed into our earnest conversations with friends and is the keynote of our more public utterances. The familiar scenes take form in our dreams and our very slumber is made sweet by holy memories. We hear the murmur of near-by streams and find rest in that deep peace which, in far-away days, we knew amid the hills of home. We can understand the heart of the psalmist when he sang a song of holy memories:

"There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her."

The Awakening. No facile writer, however realistic, can portray the difference between our town as we dreamed it and as we found it when we revisited it after twenty years. We are glad that the many folks whom we regaled with its wonders did not accompany us. The whole town seems to have suffered a shrinkage. The wonderful hotel opposite the railroad station looks like a remodeled barn without much paint used in the process. The streets are remarkably narrow. The noble shade trees which we loved are not as large as we remembered them. What a little old shack the courthouse is! And the swimming hole—well, the less said the better. Surely, we never got so mussed up and dirty as the urchins found diving from a slippery, slimy bank into a most uninviting coffee-colored pool. Something must be wrong. But there is nothing wrong. We have developed. We now see things with the eyes of maturity. Bread and molasses are as sweet as in the days of childhood, but the drip of the molasses through a hole in the bread does not make the appeal it once did. The reality of the town is unchanged. The sterling character of the people is the same. Faith in God is the same. The things which we forgot to boast about all come back to us as we worship again in the old church. It is not as magnificent as we remembered it, but the spirit of God is there. The stained-glass windows with the names of the soldiers slain in battle let through the sunlight broken into a glory which says, "I died for you." The tablet erected to a fireman killed while rescuing an old lady, still proclaims its message of sacrificial service. The externals of the town may have changed a bit with our new perspective, but as we crowd with the others about the altar to receive the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ we are convinced, with the psalmist, "God is in the midst of her."

The Day of Testing. True religion, however it is expressed in varying creeds, unites men in times of great moral crisis. Catholic, Jew, and Protestant unite to fight a common moral foe. In such a battle differences are forgotten and the common fact that the Spirit of God is the

refuge of all predominates. What religion the community actually possesses suddenly emerges in a community consciousness and a fight is waged that ends in victory. This underlies the stability of our town. We may be unable to understand or accept each other's explanation of his relationship to God, but we are keen enough to recognize the elements of righteousness in his viewpoint and living. Our aim is common; our thinking and our methods of approach are at odds. Our town is great, after all. Perhaps not for the reasons of which we bragged, but for better reasons. The Spirit of God manifesting himself in righteousness is among our folks. Here is our refuge and strength. Here is a foothold to take another step forward. Here are hope and faith and greater possibilities. No wonder the psalmist grew exultant. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved," he sang of his Jerusalem. United faith had enabled Jehovah to give them the victory against great odds. Let the nations roar and the kingdoms stir to battle! Zion, city of David, is secure. God has but to speak, and the earth melts and its proud inhabitants are scattered away. What a God of battles is Jehovah! Our father's God, the God of Jacob, is our security! Would anyone fail to rejoice in his home town when he could sing thus about it? Are we a part in making such a song possible in our day?

Blown Straws Indicating Direction

Revising Estimates. Increase of knowledge ought to result in revised estimates of folks and things. An actual experience has broadened the outlook of the psalmist. God's manifested protection of Jerusalem and its people was sufficient data on which to base a hypothesis. He asks those hearing his song to look and see for themselves what God has done. Especially let those nations who have participated in Israel's history as enemies take notice. Let them also take warning from what they see. What God has done to the Assyrians he will do to other nations until warfare shall cease. Jehovah worship must prevail in the earth. Those accepting Jehovah as their God will participate in it. God and his righteous principles of life

must prevail. His will must be done by men. Only then will there be any lasting peace. The process may be costly and bloody, but it seems to be the only way. The real prophets are right. And the psalmist urges all peoples to rally around them. If it is a good doctrine for his town, why not for other towns? His town-ideal, "God is in the midst of her," he would have other towns adopt. Hear him as he himself joins the ranks of the prophets and makes Jehovah declare:

> **"Be still, and know that I am God:**
> **I will be exalted in the earth."**

The Joy of Jerusalem. If a crowd will go wild over the victory of their football team, what must be the feelings of a city full of folks just saved from death from a ruthless enemy? The grewsome particulars of what defeat under such circumstances means, are familiar to everyone in our day—brutality and ruthlessness, fire and pestilence, old men and little children haggled, women and girls debauched and left to die of exposure. Jerusalem had escaped all this. Well might her people rejoice. They did rejoice. And they praised God for his goodness to them. They realized in a new way the value of their loyalty to him. Their faith enlarged. The fact that righteous citizens make a righteous city well pleasing in God's sight was brought from the realm of the ideal into the reality of everyday experience. Count the towns now free from the liquor traffic which rejoice as did Jerusalem. Enumerate the communities where commercialized vice is no longer allowed to lift its head. Look about and note the towns where woman- and child-labor laws are giving practical promise of a sturdier posterity. There was a reason why Jerusalem stood. There is a reason for the joy of our own towns saved from the insidious enemies who, in the guise of pleasure, destroy our citizenship. "God is in the midst of her," is the grateful refrain of this after-the-battle lyric. If we can say as much for our town, it will be possible to gain the same sort of victory and to sing a like lyric of happy community life.

Safe for Democracy. It is hypocritical cant for us to

cry, "God save the heathen," when our own communities are without God and abominably sinful. Only the living according to high ideals in the homeland makes possible the sending of high ideals abroad. For what sort of democracy do we want the world made safe? Are we willing to demonstrate economic justice? The ungodly points a finger of scorn at the divergence between our creed and practice at this most vital problem in practical Christianity. Will we take brotherhood away from the rhetoricians and help it to walk in flesh and blood freely among all men? The trenches have done this. Can the Church of Jesus Christ do less? Can sacrifice be given the broad, free scope in undiscriminating service that it has in our songs and the "finally, brethren," of our Sunday exhortation? For what sort of democracy do we want the world made safe? The psalmist knew what he would propose. It would be a democracy wherein all men recognized God and did his will. It would be a democracy which exalted God and therefore caused love to prevail among men of every color and race. The Spirit of God is moving in the hearts of men to-day as in early times. Could we do better than permit God's Spirit to prevail, take the course of events out of our blundering wisdom and make the world safe for democracy by making it the kingdom of God on earth? That day is certainly coming, for, through our night, "mornward the stars move on." With radiant faith, let us sing with Gerald Massey:

> Though hearts brood o'er the past, our eyes
> With shining futures glisten;
> Lo! now the dawn bursts up the skies:
> Lean out your souls and listen!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The earth rolls freedom's radiant way
> And ripens with her sorrow;
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The bars of hell are strong to-day,
> But Christ shall rise to-morrow.

Some Questions to Think About

What effect do "gloom peddlers" have upon our ideals and relationships with others?

Compare the usefulness of constructive optimists like Isaiah and the psalmist with the prophesying of jingoists?

Had the psalmist and his people any greater need of of an unassailable refuge than we have?

To what extent have *we* made our "home town" as bad as it is?

To what extent have *we* made our "home town" as good as it is?

Are we alive to our privilege of helping to make it possible to say, "God is in the midst of her"?

In what way does our psalm help us to see the real values in community life?

In what ways does "individual" religion fail to make a community righteous?

Discuss the customs, habits, and life of "our town" which, if adopted universally, would "make the world safe for democracy."

For what sort of democracy are we willing to work?

How long are we willing to work at this task?

CHAPTER VIII

SORROW FOR SIN

Fifty-First Psalm

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions;
And my sin is ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done that which is evil in thy sight;
That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity;
And in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts;
And in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know wisdom.
Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness,
That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence,
And take not thy holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,
And uphold me with a willing spirit.
Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation;
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
O Lord, open thou my lips;
And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it:
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
Then wilt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness,
In burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering:
Then will they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

Chickens Come Home to Roost

Sin Lodge, No. 37. Definitions give no satisfaction to a mind harassed by troubled thoughts of sin. Every new limitation put upon its seriousness lifts clearer into consciousness the sin itself. The faster we rush along in our effort to shake ourself free from the thought of it, the more insistently it cries for our attention. Sin is a Nemesis. No amount of self-delusion drives it away. It has ever been so. The psalmist gave little concern to to-morrow when he committed the sin which now assails him. But to-morrows unnumbered gave room for its consequences in his thinking, and, do his best, he was unable to escape it. Down through the years it followed him, or else ran ahead and met him along the way. It flayed and stung his conscience so that he had no peace. He belonged to the "Ancient Order of Sinners," whose fellowship is still among us. All the grips and passwords were familiar to him. No handbook was needed in order that he might deliver the charge to new and younger sinners. "I know my transgression," he admitted with heavy heart; "my sin is ever before me." Well qualified was he for fellowship with sinners of all ages. The torment of his mind would have found comradeship in Dante's Inferno, while the polished malefactor of our own generation would be a boon companion to him. Like well-bred chickens, sin always comes home to roost. At most inconvenient times it demands a hearing. Nor will it be put off without some sort of satisfaction. How we plunge into good works to quiet sin's nagging! And how futile are our efforts in getting results! The demand continues that the issue be met and fairly considered. It is at this point that we quail. Why are we so afraid to meet the demands of our sins honestly and frankly? Are we unwilling to pay the exactions which our fellowship with sin must finally make?

Guilty or Not Guilty? The man who refused to plead until he had heard the evidence against him is not a creation of the wit of a daily paper. He is a type of individual produced in large numbers in all generations. Such a man, when sin taps him on the shoulder to claim its reward, is sorry, not that he sinned, but that he has been discovered. This accounts for the many subterfuges used by lawyers in defending in court men known to be guilty of the offense charged. The sad part of it is that the guilty often escape conviction and the judge pronounces "Discharged." Small comfort in such exoneration. When Charles Steele, in The Right of Way, turns on the man whom he had just successfully defended against the charge of murder, as he makes to thank him, he exclaims, "You are guilty." Nor is his attitude isolated. Most people feel the same way when they read of investigations which result in a whitewashing of the accused. And the individual concerned always feels that way. For, though God remains indefinitely the "unknown" quantity in life's equation, few there are who expect to pass over the Great Divide without in some way finding reality for the symbol. The need of God becomes so great that the hollowness of assumed righteousness becomes appalling. Sin, then, must be dealt with according to the facts. The psalmist had come to this conclusion. Whatever life had given him of joy or position or wealth, it was all fleshless bones because of sin and of being without fellowship with God. He therefore sought relief from the torments of his conscience in prayer to Jehovah. He laid his heart bare and confessed what he had done. He offered no excuse of extenuating circumstances, temperament, or ignorance. He pleaded guilty without qualification. And he asked God's mercy in his behalf.

An Hour with the Judge

The Value of Clearness. The amplification of the meaning of sin was necessary for the psalmist, not for God. It is the guilty man who must understand clearly the significance of what he has done when he seeks mercy

at the hands of God. So the psalmist elaborates. He has transgressed. Some defection from God has occurred. Or, perchance, he has rebelled against God's laws or against God himself. He has committed iniquity. He has perverted the right or indulged in depraved conduct. He has sinned. Some error has been committed. He has wandered from the right way. He has missed the mark in life. In making the matter clear he has stated the full case against himself. His very clearness has stamped him guilty. Did he sidestep his statement when he realized what he had said? Not he! He wanted to be freed from it all. In order to be freed he must confess it. A bad case, surely. Our case is bad, as well. Perhaps ours is a bit worse. For, to his knowledge of the law of God we have added the teaching of Jesus concerning the thinking of evil. Where does this new content to the meaning of sin put our case? Have we made clear to ourselves the significance of the chair we occupy in our hour in court with God?

Say It. What would you say if you were in the place of the psalmist? Sin confessed abjectly, what next step would you take? It was no dress rehearsal that the singer of "The Song of a Sinful Soul" was going through. It was a page from life. It was all stern indictment, self-indictment at that. Tragedy may be analyzed with composure when read some hundreds of years after it occurs. But even youthful love gives heartaches at its sudden breaking off. And it was no teen-age romance with which the poet was concerned. Driven by his sin, he was seeking relief. In order to find it he had followed the teachings of his fathers. He had confessed his sins before God. But admission does not give full relief. The psalmist wanted to be rid of his sin. He was as willing to have it torn from him as we are to leave a nerve-racking tooth in the dentist's office. So he pleaded with all the terminology with which his day was familiar to be freed from that which was making life scarcely worth living. There is no stopping to discuss the theological value of the methods which he is about to suggest. He knows what he wants and he uses all the knowledge he has to

make the matter clear. Sinners of times more modern than this Israelite pleader have considered God as a great bookkeeper. And many there are who think that in some way they will be able to juggle the trial balance. "Blot out my transgressions," he urges. With intense expectancy he lifts up his face and cries out. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity," he continues, as he recalls the thoroughness with which the fuller washes the clothes. "Cleanse me from my sin"; pronounce me "clean" among my people, he adds, as though to let no phase of his desire escape attention. That he states that he was born in iniquity is not a slur against his mother, but an expression of his inherited belief—the inherited sinfulness of man. He knows that God desires inward purity and asks for that wisdom which is spiritual discernment. All the ceremonial of his religion comes to mind. As the leper is sprinkled in the rites of cleansing with a bunch of hyssop for a sprinkler, so he would be treated. His clothes he would have washed according to the rites of purification. Is he merely a ceremonialist? Will forms and observances do? No. Through all of his prayer is the earnest longing:

> "Create within me a clean heart, O God,
> And renew a right spirit within me."

No half-way measures satisfy a soul truly sorry for sin. It must be all or nothing. And all includes not only the satisfaction of forgiveness. It also takes in the presence of God's Spirit. Salvation is no narrow term. It embraces all that God has in mind for man. This includes forgiveness, a new life, and development in God-likeness. The psalmist was making a big petition that day. Are we equal to him in our thought of what God will do for us if we permit him?

Who Pays the Cost?

The Aftermath. That sacred spot where God forgives our sin should not receive all of our attention for the

rest of our life. No doubt, the psalmist could have sung with great gusto, had it been written in his time:

> "Happy day, happy day
> When Jesus washed my sins away:
> He taught me how to watch and pray,
> And live rejoicing every day."

There is no evidence in his psalm, however, that he pitched his tent and remained there until the day he was buried. There are a number of matters to be attended to when God forgives a man of his sins. What about the people who have suffered and must continue to suffer because of a man's sins, now forgiven? Is there no payment to be made to them? Must they ever bear burdens because we ignored God's laws? Where is justice to be found if that were so? The psalmist would have his heart "tell its raptures all abroad." He would do even better than that. He would teach transgressors the ways of God. He would strive to convert sinners to God. But what about his cry, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God"? Was he a murderer? If so, did his forgiveness by God close the case so far as he was concerned? Hardly. Somewhere in his song he strikes a note that summons us like a bugle call to attention:

> "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
> A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The humility of a genuine penitence which ends in forgiveness does not permit the closing of the door of the past that the one forgiven may pass on unconcerned into the days ahead. Nor does it permit the seeking of satisfaction in boasting of the sinfulness of by-gone days. It stirs the new-born soul to acts of restitution. Not only will the tongue sing aloud of God's righteousness; the life also will be characterized by righteousness similar to God's. Sorrow for sin does not cease when forgiveness causes a new day to dawn in human experience. It goes on through life as a silent unseen companion of the inner sanctuary. It points out the newer pitfalls and slippery places, but it also whispers of bygone wrongs that may yet be righted.

The nagging of sin itself is gone. The persuasiveness of sorrow for sin steps in to take its place. The aftermath of forgiveness needs our attention in more ways than one.

The Joy of Salvation. He who first united the term "joy" with salvation made a real contribution to life. Had he said "happiness" he would have failed miserably. For salvation unites one in fellowship with God. Could any word but joy express that union? And the joy is not mere satisfaction in having broken loose from sin's firm hold. It is found, rather, in the privilege of sharing God's great task in giving to men the heritage which he intended them to have. What a different experience is the joy of salvation from the experience of the harrowing of conscience! The one is a stimulus, the other a drag. And stimulus is needed, for the task is great. Other folks are just as stubborn as we are. Their sin is none of our business, so they say. We cannot preach them into our way of thinking. "You did not always think this way," they answer. Among the psalmist's people thousands of sheep and goats and doves were slain to help men to see God's wisdom and the beauty of his righteousness. They called it a sacrifice for sin. The cost was all paid by the slain dumb beasts. But the results were not very encouraging. Years later they crucified Jesus Christ outside the city of Jerusalem. Many have been the men and the women who have found the way because of his sacrifice. Just as the sacrifice of sheep availed nothing because it was external, so the sacrifice of Jesus benefits us not at all unless we participate in it.

Some Questions to Think About

What is sin?

Why does the thought of our sins torment us?

Who are involved in trouble by sin?

How far does God's forgiveness of our sins make matters right with those whose lives are affected by our sins?

Why is it necessary for us to acknowledge ourselves guilty before we can ask forgiveness?

To what extent is "a clean heart" essential to good living?

In what way are we offering to God the sacrifice of "a broken and a contrite heart"?

How may we show to others the way to forgiveness for sins?

CHAPTER IX

THE JOYS OF THE SANCTUARY

ADDITIONAL READINGS, PSALM 122

The Eighty-Fourth Psalm

"How amiable are thy tabernacles,
O Jehovah of hosts!
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.
Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
Even thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts,
My King, and my God.
Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:
They will be still praising thee. (Selah.)
Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;
In whose heart are the highways *to Zion*.
Passing through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs;
Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.
They go from strength to strength;
Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.
O Jehovah God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob. (Selah.)
Behold, O God our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.
For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield:
Jehovah will give grace and glory;
No good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.
O Jehovah of Hosts,
Blessed is the man that trusteth in th..."

Is the Question Debatable?

A Matter of Opinion: or, Is It Training and Habit?
For a long time the psalmist has been prevented from

worshiping Jehovah in the temple at Jerusalem. His heart has been made heavy by the forced absence. The house of God was a joyous place for him. He had been brought up to attend its services regularly and gladly. When twelve years of age he had become a son of the law and a member of the congregation of Israel. From that time on he had learned to love its services more and more. The joyous songs of the pilgrims going up Mount Zion was happy music in his ears. The antiphonal chanting of the psalms thrilled his soul with its wonder. The message of the Scriptures was as the voice of God to him. Even the slaying of lamb and kid and snow-white dove upon the altar of sacrifice had drawn him closer to the place set apart where all his nation came to acknowledge their allegiance to Jehovah. It was all a part of his life. When he prayed at home, he knelt with his face toward Jerusalem. And now, after long absence, to be permitted once more to stand in the courts of Jehovah! Is it not well to ask how our love of the Church of the Living God compares with his? Does our entire being cry out in its desire to bow at the altar of our church? Do we sing of the worthiness of the place where God's presence is sought? Across the fields or down the street a bell is tolling the hour of worship. Do we respond with a happy assurance within that the services and ministries of our church mean to us all that they might have meant? Do we find God's presence when we enter his house to offer praise to his name? Is it a matter of opinion, or is it something deeper that causes a man to cry:

"How amiable are thy tabernacles,
O Jehovah of hosts!
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God."

Why Go to Church? There are those who think that "church-going" is a device thought up by a group of people who are endeavoring to have all others follow their plan. They place the church in the list of causes instead of results. The church usually comes vitally into a man's

experience after he gets acquainted with God. Love of worship is an expression of God's love within. Every live soul, whether joyous or sad, seeks communion with God. In isolation its own experiences are magnified, its joys underestimated, its sorrows enlarged. In company with a number of like-minded people a better perspective is obtained, a common message is received, and hymns which give voice to the whole range of soul-need are sung. Without this sense of God's presence there, the church is merely a place where we may be christened, married, and, finally, buried. This was not the psalmist's conception of God's house. The spirit of worship thrilled his soul. He longed to be where he could give expression to it. True, he worshiped Jehovah where he was, but the need of public worship set his mind eagerly toward the hour when, as in other days, he would be in Jerusalem. His ability to worship God wherever he was, apparently had not lessened his sense of need of worship in God's house. Has learning to realize God's presence at all times in all places caused us to lose sight of the *need* of such worship? Do we not feel the need of uniting with others in the expression of our love of God? Has not something gone wrong with the reasoning of our generation in this respect? People sometimes attend church for a Sunday or two after a death in their family. They then recognize the fact that in worshiping with others, a man gains confidence in his religious faith, receives strength to live better, has new visions of spiritual possibilities opened before him, and learns how to render to God the praise which his heart ever yearns to give. Have we learned what real worship is? Or have we merely been "going to church"?

A Church Home. The individual who first said "a church home" had some of the spirit of the psalmist in him. "Home is where the heart is" some singer of our day has sung. And the heart of the psalmist was in the temple. He thought of the privilege enjoyed by the birds. Both sparrow and swallow nested in the crevices about the temple buildings. When they winged their way across the sky toward evening it was to spend the night

where incense burned amid the atmosphere of worship. He thought also of the ministers of the temple, those who day by day performed the services appointed by God. How fortunate they were! Their home was in the temple. They lived and toiled there. There was no worship which they could not hear, even if their duties prevented actual participation. Is the psalmist's expression at this point a comment on our neglect of privilege or a challenge to the better use of it? Our mode of worship does not necessitate the continuous presence in the church building. Does this cut us off from such joy as the psalmist had? There are thousands to-day whose entire life is developed with the church as its center. They not only rejoice in the worship in which they are permitted to participate, they also enter into the minister's privilege of aiding others to worship God in spirit and in truth. Here they learn of the service God would have them render during the hours of earning a livelihood or attending to life's duties. Here they come with a report of their successes or failures to learn how better to live and how better to succeed. These help the minister to help them to worship God acceptably. They help the minister to render the largest service of which he is capable. The church where such a one has worshiped feels a loss when above the cold, still body the minister reads, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." The church has been home, and there is sorrow in the home for the loss of one of its circle.

The Reciprocity of Religion

The Joy of Getting. An invitation to worship God ought to be an interesting proposition to a man who is always alert to his own highest advantage. The rumor of countless offerings taken in the churches has doubtless caused many to overlook this phase of the question. It is not all giving, for those who worship God in spirit and in truth. It may be for those whose worship is mere formality, but folks like the psalmist get returns out of

all proportion to what they give in this respect. Without egotism the singer joins the throng of those concerning whom he says,

> "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;
> In whose heart are the highways *to Zion*."

His utterance sounds like a good old Methodist class leader's testimony. Can anyone be other than happy whose heart is set on the worship of God? Happy in the process of worship is such a one, and happy in the results which flood his soul in response to his earnest worship. The blessings which come from the worship of God are exceedingly practical. They know no limitation of country, time, or race. The ancient Israelite in Jerusalem, the uncouth Negro in Africa, and the débutante of our modern American city, each alike may be recipients of the same great blessings. The blessings of the worshiper are spiritual and as such permit the individual to make their application in life's affairs practical. What spiritual vision floods the soul as one unreservedly communes with and praises God! New courage and strength are received to back up faltering purposes. A new light shines along the pathway ahead. The burdens brought into the service of worship are transformed into opportunities. Unsurmountable obstacles disappear with the new perspective. After such an hour with God the happy worshiper goes forth richer than when he came. With a song in his heart he turns the barren places and hard experiences of life into fruitful vineyards and helpful, joyous occasions. Many a dull and desertlike life has been made as a garden of roses by some one who has come fresh from the presence of God. Has anyone ever blessed your life in this way? Memory will furnish a goodly list of bright spots of this nature if given an opportunity. And just ahead are countless lives reaching out a hand to touch the joy of your soul as you pass them in the highway. "But you give out again what you get?" Yes, and in so doing come to realize the significance of worshiping God, the enjoying such fellowship with him as to be strong oneself and in that strength to go forth to bless others.

The Strength of the Pack. One's spiritual strength is an individual development, but it finds its best expression in company with others. There is more than poetry in the hymn beginning:

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love,
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.
Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares."

Men are bound together by the love of God. The psalmist knew this. He knew how they are strengthened by a knowledge of a common fellowship. He had felt his heart leap at the sight of families whom he knew as they joined the happy pilgrims bound for Jerusalem. God had been good to them also. What, a son has died? Yes, but God's strength was sufficient. How we multiply the psalmist's experience! The "fellowship of kindred souls" has helped us to bear burdens, endure sorrows, overcome obstacles, rise up when overtaken and struck down. For those of the fellowship understand our problems. We know the hardships of their journey. Our deeper experiences are alive with the consciousness of our mutual dependence. We stand erect with the strength of all as we go forth to meet the issues of each new day. The joy of it all reaches its best expression when together we praise God in his house. It is the yearning for this worship that brings us together in the church. It is the strength received from worshiping together that makes the world so much brighter. Are you getting from the fellowship of worship all that you possibly can?

Neglect or Lack of Appreciation? There are some people who spend their evenings singing, "O that will be glory to me," who have forgotten all about the church around the corner. Living so near that they may "run in to the church," they are busy buttoning their coat when they reach it and pass right by. A few years on the

frontier would do wonders for such people. When a man has to drive a team twenty miles in order to take his family to church they all appreciate the service. In communities where they do not see a preacher oftener than once a year, where the dead are buried "without benefit of clergy," one has a different feeling about the church. The débauchés of many a mining camp would give much had they stayed where the influence of the church is felt. The lumber-jacks welcome the sky-pilot and hear his message with burning heart and tear-wet cheeks. Would these, thus limited in their opportunity to worship God, find comradeship with the psalmist? In his exile from the house of God he put it thus: "I had rather perform the humblest service at the temple of him who tolerates no evil than be entertained as a guest where wickedness makes its house." Is *one* day in the house of God so prized by us that no effort is too great for us to make in order to get there? What about the tired excuse, the clothes excuse, the preacher-did-not-speak-to-me excuse, the do-not-approve-of-one-of-the-officials excuse, and all the others? Is it neglect with us or are we too stupid to value rightly a great privilege because it is so close at hand?

At the Turn of the Road

This Way In. The blessings of God await those who go after them. There is no urging them on us. If we do not want them, we are not obliged to have them; but if we do want them, we must seek them. It may be true that God blesses us where we are if we "walk uprightly," but we are better informed as to what "walking uprightly" is when we regularly hear God's word interpreted to us by a minister of God. Business drives us with unrelenting vigor six days a week. Household cares and duties fill every hour with some new demand. Scarcely is there time to attend to the neighborhood social obligations. Much less is there time for the deep and thoughtful study of God's Word. What is the function of the minister? Not to prepare sermons for us and have us at home reading the cartload of Sunday newspaper delivered by a boy about day-

break. Not to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when we are at home cleaning the "flivver" for an afternoon spin. Not to preach the obligations for service resting on every member of the community while we are trying to close a real-estate deal over the back fence. The minister of God has his time set aside to make clear God's will for men. He brings to his pulpit a message fresh for each day's need—*our* need. If we are present, he quickens our conscience by applying truth to our way of living. He ever keeps us reexamining ourselves. He lifts us up to see visions we had not dreamed God wanted us to know about. Of course the minister can study the Bible for us if necessary. But we will get nothing from his study unless we are on hand to hear his report. Are we afraid of what he may have to say? It may all be good news, who knows? Already our presence at the service of worship has brought us blessings which would have been lost forever had we not been in the church. Why not try wearing a well-used path from our door to the church? It will take us to many a new blessing.

"Go to Church Sunday." There is something incongruous in such a slogan. Imagine the psalmist launching a "Go up to the temple Sabbath." How the Philistines would have jibed! What they would have said would not have sounded well even in the streets of Ascalon. They would have forthwith buckled on their armor and advanced upon the Israelites with arms steeled by the knowledge that Jehovah no longer was the "God of hosts." "Ha ha" and "ha ha" would have echoed through the valleys. And the psalmist's song would long since have been consigned to the limbo of discarded verse. Instead of such a method the psalmist let others know of the joy that worship in the sanctuary gave to him. He sang of the added strength which comes to God's worshipers. He rejoiced in no uncertain notes over the privilege of "appearing before God." He wanted everyone in all places to know that he worshiped Jehovah and got strength, inspiration, courage, uplift, and satisfaction from such worship. If anyone would know real joy, let him learn the comfort of God's house, the wisdom of God's Word, the harmony of God's

songs. "Go to church Sunday"? Rather, worship Jehovah in the beauty of holiness! Not a formality for a day, but a living experience for all life. Not a response to a booster movement, but a constant satisfying of the soul's need in regular public communion with the soul's Saviour. The psalmist was a bit advanced for our times. What has kept us behind his day?

How Do We Worship? Perhaps the trouble lies here. Many who assemble regularly in the church have never been taught how to worship. They come bustling into church a few minutes late. They enter with noise and are seated with confusion. The first few minutes are spent in looking about to see who are present. The atmosphere which they bring into the service is not that of worship at all. We should enter God's house in the spirit of worship. We should be there before the hour for the service to begin and spend the intervening moments in meditation. What have we come for? What need can God supply at this hour? What attitudes of mind and heart must be changed before he can bless us? We should pray silently for God's presence, for the inspiration of the minister, for the awakening of souls that are half asleep. We should worship in the singing. Our offering should be given with a sense of its usefulness in God's work. We should permit the minister actually to lead our minds in prayer, thus making his petition our own. With open mind and hungering heart we should seek light and spiritual food in his message. Do we worship God in spirit and in truth? Wherein do we fail? Perhaps in our ignorance of the way we have missed the psalmist's joy in the service of the sanctuary. Are we willing to learn to go the full length and worship God as God? Such response on our part might shortly find us singing with our joyous psalmist:

> **"Jehovah God is a sun and a shield:**
> **Jehovah will give grace and glory;**
> **No good thing will he withhold**
> **From them that walk uprightly.**
>
> **O Jehovah of hosts,**
> **Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."**

Some Questions to Think About

What influence has God's house had in your life? In your home? Among your loved ones?

To what extent has your absence from the services of worship influenced others to remain away?

Do we feel sorry enough for the heathen who do not know God to use the great privilege which we have of worshiping him?

How many folks know that you prize the worship of God's house?

Do you plan to have time for worship?

What does worship signify to you?

Have you ever learned how to worship?

What suggestions would you make to yourself in the matter?

How can you help to make public worship of more value to others?

CHAPTER X

TRUST IN GOD

ADDITIONAL READINGS, PSALMS 122 AND 123

The Ninety-First Psalm

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in whom I trust.
For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
And from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover thee with his pinions,
And under his wings shalt thou take refuge:
His truth is a shield and a buckler.
Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
For the pestilence that walketh in darkness,
Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
A thousand shall fall at thy side,
And ten thousand at thy right hand;
But it shall not come nigh thee.
Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold,
And see the reward of the wicked.
For thou, O Jehovah, art my refuge!
Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation;
There shall no evil befall thee,
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent.
For he will give his angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways.
They shall bear thee up in their hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
The young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under foot.
Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble:
I will deliver him, and honor him.
With long life will I satisfy him,
And show him my salvation."

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Traveler's Luck

The Highway of the Years. The journey of life is not as monotonous as many newspaper paragraphers seem to imply. Certainly, it is exciting and varied to the footloose adventurer seeking new and unknown bypaths. Each new day develops some untried possibility in life-journeying. It is none the less generous in its offering of opportunity for great days to those set in one place by the ties of home, family, customs, and necessary toil. The multiplying experiences of the most ordinary existence lend a color and atmosphere often unnoticed as one trudges along in the blinding dust and sweat. The days bring with them a consciousness of the likeness of all human experience. Looking back over the years gives a new and more appreciative appraisal to bygone experiences and a keener realization of life's real values. Perhaps this is one of the compensations of old age. At least, the recognition of God's goodness when one comes to the end of the road makes fragrant with grateful memory the thoughts of his help throughout the years. Nor is it necessary to wait until the foothills of the downward journey are reached to enjoy such satisfaction of soul. The psalmist in the vigorous years of his manhood was able to sing:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Many of the long stretches of life's routine are made glad by such a feeling of trust in God. Old age holds no terrors. The sinking sun will be all glorious and golden. The heart lifts up the courageous shout:

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,'
Youth shows but half; trust God: See all nor be afraid!"

"Isles of Safety." Where traffic is heavy in the larger

cities "isles of safety" are placed in the middle of the street. Amid the confusion and uproar and the jam of vehicles and pedestrians one is there secure. Though out of breath and flustered, one has opportunity for retaking his bearings. He goes forth for the balance of the crossing rested and reassured. Busy highways are not the only place where such "isles of safety" are needed. Heart highways become frequent scenes of disconcerting confusion. A good start becomes a hopeless uncertainty half-way over a crisis crossing. Dismay gives place to the buoyant going forth. Distrust of self lends strength to the possibility of disaster. The singer of his trust in Jehovah knew the need of "isles of safety." He considers the best of such safety zones to be the "dwelling in the secret place of the Most High." There are those who go plunging past the traffic police. Wise in their own conceit they imagine themselves able to escape skidding automobile or skittish horse. Not so the psalmist. He trusted in the security afforded him. Else why should it be there for him? Is Jehovah a sort of hiding place along the way? Yes, just as a mother-bird lifts her wings to protect her young, so is God thoughtful of his safety. No ordinary "isle of safety" this. It is God in whom he puts his trust. The same God whom Abraham trusted, the God of Moses—the Almighty. Why worry about inconsequential things? What are a few stone-bruises from the sharp, harsh experiences of life with such assurance! Who would be concerned over the scratches from the briars of unsympathetic and scornful fellow travelers! "He is my refuge and my fortress," he trustfully sings on. A sure purpose is possible where trust is absolute. All of his own powers were free for the needs of the problems before him. So certain is he that God will do for him all that he has promised that he is ready to do his part in qualifying for the protection in which he so implicitly believes. And he is willing to let everyone know where he stands. By so doing he doubles his protection, for he must of necessity now do his part or else become a butt for the ridicule of those who still live on with a faith in their own ability to make the crossing, even of life's deepest experiences, unaided.

Such not only find no cause to say "I told you it could not be done," they also receive a challenge to join the ranks of those prudent travelers who watch for guideposts and signs warning of danger.

The Unseen Foe. It is difficult to prepare for unseen foes. Life is full of Indian fighting. Harmless-looking experiences prove to be the hiding place of arrows of death. Inviting byways turn out to be set with the insidious snares of soul fowlers. Gas masks become a necessity in places which seem to be wholesome. Pestilence lays hold on character while one turns to look around. The pages of Life's Guidebook are replete with all the horror of such things. And the life described therein is of men and women who thought they knew all the arts of life-traveling. In his Poems of the Yukon, Robert W. Service pictures the hell on earth that possesses the lives of men and women in that far-off, wild country. And those who come out of Alaska after a few years there tremble for those who must stay on. Strong, educated, God-fearing, they succumb to the unseen foes which beset the soul in a country lacking in the restraints of conventional communities. Nor are those who live in the cultured centers of our land free from the unseen foes of life. All around us they strike and men fall. Wherever we go the story is told with the same plot, the names alone being different. It furnishes headlines for the newspaper each morning, business for lawyers and judges, and sad obituary material for ministers and friends. Folks save themselves from sunstroke by proper diet, dress, and headgear. They put their trust in that which is able to protect them. But against the blistering heat that shrivels the soul and warps life they too often feel no need of protection. They are like the student who could parse sentences, analyze a flower, and dissect a frog, but had never thought of learning to swim until the boat in which he was rowing began to sink. They put their trust in those things which cannot help the soul to maintain its integrity when the unexpected temptation appears. The psalmist appears like a wayfarer fully equipped compared to such travelers. He may not know the way he is going, but he has no question

in his mind concerning the wisdom and trustworthiness of his Guide.

Guidebooks and Guides

Accurate and Reliable. If this can be said of one's watch it is a time-piece to go by without concern. It notes the passing time with certainty. Five o'clock by it to-morrow will hold the same place in the passing day as did five o'clock yesterday. Trains may be caught by trust in its reliability. Business appointments may be kept. The man who claimed that he set the sun by his watch may have used hyperbole, but what he meant was that his watch never failed him. That is the way the psalmist felt about God. His faithfulness was not open to debate. It was dependable. Each day of life added to the psalmist's assurance at this point. The very fact that God never failed in keeping his promises made him a certain protection. Apparently, the psalmist had as great need of defense against other people as men have to-day. There were those who delighted in speaking evil of others in those days. Men were as willing then as now to profit from the labors of others. Under the guise of friendship they were adept at "feeling out" a man's thoughts, opinions, and ambitions in order to spread them out in the light of day to retard his progress. Bitterness, maliciousness, and backbiting are not modern discoveries in doing evil. Why seek a patent for the ability to spread false stories by mere suggestion or query, "Do you think thus and so?" The folks whom the psalmist knew were so like us that he implies the need of a shield large enough to cover him all over. And God's faithfulness is all of this. If a man can realize God's protection in life's battles, he will be able to give a good account of himself. Inspired by the protection of God, the psalmist was able to give valiant battle to his adversaries. He was not a coward. He was willing to meet every wile of sin, either within himself or against him. His trust in God did not lessen the fight in him. It gave him poise, strength, and the ability to place each blow where it would count. What sense of God's faithfulness

to care for us do we have when our trust in God is absolute? Are we acquainted with God's ways with men?

A Human Singer. The song of our study was not spun by the muse. The singer used experience and fact for his measures. He was not only a poet, but also somewhat of a historian. The "terror by night" and the "pestilence that walketh in darkness" and "the destruction that wasteth at noonday," fill one with a sense of horror akin to the first reading of "The Murder in the Rue Morgue," by Edgar Allan Poe. All that the imagination can conceive may be crowded into those few lines. All the open or secret hostilities to one's life may be read into the verses. They become alive with all the modern interpretation of assaults on the soul and subsequent consequences. Where did the psalmist get his figures of speech? Out of the history of his own poeple. His trust in God was based on the long look as well as on personal experience. He could see the ancestors of his fathers toiling as slaves in Egypt. He pictured the plea of Moses and the visitation of the plagues upon the people of Pharaoh. The glow in his eyes deepened as he saw the heads of families splashing the blood of a slain lamb on the doorpost and lintel of each Israelite home. Why did they stand, staff in hand, eating unleavened bread with the lamb? Ah, the morning told why. All Egypt was shocked by the cry from every Egyptian home. "Our first-born is slain! Our first-born is slain!" But God had been with the harassed slaves. Unharmed he led them forth as freedmen. The Red Sea opened to let them pass. And in its waters they saw their enemies and one-time masters drowned. Could he sing of trust in God? Listen to his voice:

> **"A thousand shall fall at thy side,**
> **And ten thousand at thy right hand;**
> ***But* it shall not come nigh thee.**
> **Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold**
> **And see the reward of the wicked."**

Why not sing with such a song in one's heart? Is that a sense of safety to let go by unheralded? "Such safety is mine, such safety may be yours," the song says

clearly, "if absolute trust is placed in God." In what sense is that safety characteristic of the life of a Christian man to-day? Our singer was one of the folks. His song has a pride of nation in it. And that pride is because his people trusted in God. Can a nation be safe without God's protection? Where do we count in the answer to questions like this?

A Part of the Process. Things do not happen. Cause and result travel the same road. They may not swing along arm-in-arm. They may be days or even years apart. But once cause goes down the way, it is certain that result will be along in due time. The realization of this truth has saved many a traveler embarrassment and suffering. It enables one to accept bravely the universal experiences of life and to avoid, with wisdom, many unnecessary experiences. All unpleasant experiences are not evil. Some of them are hard to endure. They bring gray hairs and furrowed brow. Spiritual growth frequently accompanies them. But some of them are evil. And from these the psalmist would have us free. His method is to make

> **"The Lord, which is my refuge,**
> **Even the Most High, thy habitation."**

To have the mind occupied with thoughts of God, his ways, his promises, his laws, his requirements—can the mind while so occupied yield to those thoughts which lead to evil? The psalmist sings of a life of safety based on thinking of God. Sin will become repugnant during such a process. Temptation will make very little headway, no matter how insinuating. Misfortune will be traced to its actual source. Sorrow will yield a closer fellowship with the heavenly Father. Death will be a culmination of life. The psalmist urges the experience of him who boldly declared, "I know whom I have believed." Travelers unnumbered have been trudging along life's highway for centuries. The milestones have been labeled with practically the same experience. The bypaths and pitfalls have ever been numerous. But "God-thinking" men and women have checked off the milestones with courageous heart and

unquestioning mind. The firmness of their step and the purpose of their journey have carried them past the snares and pestilence unharmed. Their "habitation" has been God, and no "plague" has come nigh "their dwelling." Have we fully learned that the greatest security, and consequently the sweetest peace, is found in the realization of the Divine Presence?

Companions of the Way

The Unseen Guard. The ancient Israelites conceived of the hosts of God surrounding and protecting them. Another singer phrased it thus:

"The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him,
And delivereth them."

It is this unseen guardianship which gives heart in the dark hours of struggle for high ideals and noble living. It is into the hands of the Unseen Guard that every mother intrusts her children when they leave home for the first time. It is the Unseen Guard who patrols the portals of our hearts and summons us to awaken and give battle when our spirit seems not to fight against its foe. It is this unseen companion of the way who ever whispers to take the advice of Richard Watson Gilder, who sang:

"Keep pure thy soul!
Then thou shalt take the whole
Of delight;
Then, without a pang,
Thine shall be all of beauty whereof the poet sang—
The perfume, and the pageant, the melody, the mirth
Of the golden day, and the starry night;
Of heaven and of earth.
O, keep pure thy soul!"

Our trust in God which prompts us to "think of God" helps us here. "Blessed are the pure in heart," said Jesus Christ, "for they shall see God." And only the viewpoint of God in a man's mind makes possible such

thinking as gives purity of heart, and such life-practices as make enjoyable the actual fellowship of God as Companion of the Way.

The Sure Promises of God. Do we realize how certain these promises are? No "maybe," or "possibly," or "perhaps," weakens their power. They are from the Source of all power, and he never fails. Those who have faith in such assurances as they travel along have hearts emboldened for all that the journey may encounter. Now and then a gloomy individual claims that "the promises did not work" with him. Like many of us, he failed to recognize the conditions which must be met in order that God may justly fulfill his promises. He would take all that he could get and give nothing in return. The result of such an attitude in dealing with God is that one usually gets nothing. The promises of God were sure to the psalmist because he trusted in God absolutely. Do we? Or do we assume that we may run to cover at the critical moment and then God will look after the rest? There is an argument and an explanation, a promise and a way of obtaining it, in the closing strains of the singer's confession of trust in God. He breaks forth into melody as the mouthpiece of God, putting his own experience into terms which will fit all generations. He lifts his voice and to our day declares with gladness to those who trust in God:

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he has known my name.
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble:
I will deliver him, and honor him.
With long life will I satisfy him,
And show him my salvation."

A modern poet, George Keith, has sung to the great comfort of God's people a like message:

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

"In every condition—in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad; on the land, on the sea—
'As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.

"'The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!'"

Some Questions to Think About

In what sense is life a journey? Describe it.

Why do we need "isles of safety" along the journey? Where do we find them?

From what unseen foes against our spiritual life do we need protection?

How does trust in God help us in this respect?

How has God manifested his faithfulness in your life?

To what extent are we making God our "habitation"?

In what way do we daily increase our trust in God?

How does trust in God, such as the psalmist's, help us in times of perplexity?

In what way does practical demonstration of our trust help others?

CHAPTER XI

ADORATION AND PRAISE

The One Hundred and Third Psalm

"Bless Jehovah, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.
Bless Jehovah, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
Jehovah executeth righteous acts,
And judgments for all that are oppressed.
He made known his ways unto Moses,
His doings unto the children of Israel.
Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.
He will not always chide;
Neither will he keep *his anger* forever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.
For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust.
As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.
But the lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to
everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his precepts to do them.

Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.
Bless Jehovah, ye his angels,
That are mighty in strength, that fulfill his word,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts,
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
Bless Jehovah, all ye his works,
In all places of his dominion:
Bless Jehovah, O my soul."

The Music of the Soul

The Adoration. Learned men offering precious gifts as they bow at the feet of the infant Jesus is the picture of adoration that comes to mind whenever the subject is broached. The mother and the tiny babe surrounded by the surprised cattle in a stranger's stable, the stately visitors who have come camel-back over the desert, the wonderful richness of their gifts—from childhood the scene has taken firm hold upon the imagination. And now, with the driving stress of an upturned world, it becomes a lesson in homage to the God whom peoples of the widest possible diversity are claiming as their God. Elaborate forms of worship, intricate creeds, lengthy prayers—all that was a part of a gradual development in the times of quiet and peace to-day fail to answer man's religious needs. He yearns for some way of paying homage to God that will be an expression of his own innermost desires and needs. Amid the turmoil and the disquieting news, and among the lonely and those whose service stars of blue have been replaced by shining gold, there is a longing for a simple approach to God. New songs of praise are being born in heart-experiences which may be sung to God alone. Recognition of his sustaining strength is begetting a desire to spread at God's feet soul-offerings which are exceedingly personal. Men and women to whom the forms and ceremonies of established religious institutions are strange and unfamiliar are seeking to make clear to God the earnestness of their hearts, just as the wise men of the Bethlehem stable showed to the newborn baby King their high respect and worship. How

shall they do it? Are we providing ways for the heart-psalms born of bitter grief to sing their way to God? Are we breaking new paths which will be accessible to those who need a way to God at once? Adoration and praise are waiting for God in places where they would not have been looked for a few years ago. What obligation does this fact put upon us to show others practical ways of expressing to God the things that they do not know how to tell?

Ancient Songs of Praise. A man has been doing some hard thinking who phrases the outburst of his song in the words,

> **Bless Jehovah, O my soul;**
> **And all that is within me, bless his holy name.**

Many there are who bless or extol the name of God who confine the entire process to their lips. Not of this multitude was the psalmist. He would glorify God with all that he possessed. Not only with his soul, which to him was self or personality, would he pay homage. The whole range of his powers is summoned to unite in praise of the one alone worthy of all praise. As though he stood outside of himself for a minute, he exhorts every power which he possesses. The sin of forgetfulness comes to his mind and he warns his soul to remember all that Jehovah has done for him. Iniquities have been blotted out. Suffering and disease have been done away with and those who have observed it have known that he was in favor with God. Both he and his people had been saved out of Babylonian destruction. As with a crown God's goodness and mercy had rested upon him. From the grave of exile he and his neighbors had come forth to the freshness of life and its joys in the land of their youth. Vigor like that of the eagle soaring toward the sun was his. His heart was full of emotions that were of the most personal sort. Bless Jehovah? Of a truth "out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh" in the case of the psalmist. And in the homage prompted by the confession of what God had done for him he spoke in words that express the feeling of those countless thousands who

give God praise and credit for the things in their lives for which he is responsible. Why is it that our song of praise to God so often flats? What purpose of mind had the psalmist in his adoration of Jehovah that we lack?

There's a Song in the Air. Across the hearthstones of the peoples of all nations lie the shadows of war. In countless hospitals men are lying with bodies shattered and reason gone. Within sight of "No Man's Land" sons and brothers, husbands and sweethearts are buried. Where is the God of whom the psalmist sang? Have folks been mistaken in accepting at face value all that the ages have handed down concerning his love and care for man? Is there homage yet to be offered to a God whose worshipers have been using their every power to destroy each other? The mind questions as the heart breaks at the memory of the news from overseas. Is it a time to lift the voice in praise of God for his lovingkindness and tender mercy? Josiah G. Holland, a poet of our own day, has breathed for us a song that we sing in the twilight hours of the day:

"There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer,
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!"

We sing it in the twilight hours, for then is the time when we can best think clearly and without confusion. What God means in our lives is more apparent at such a time. With the psalmist we recognize what we would be without God. The news of battle, the treachery of men, the hopeless outlook of the future—they all seem to melt into the vision of the song as we remember Him of whom the poet sings. The ages have fought themselves into the light with his name on the lips of men. The darkness of night has time and again rolled back with the promise of morning because of his teachings practiced by men and women. And now it is for the sake of his Kingdom that blood has been shed, homes have been

thrown into grief, lives have been made lonely for the rest of life's journey. And in it all stand out in sharp relief the blessings which have come to us as individuals, which God gave, but which we accepted as though from our own hands. There is more reason for us to pay homage to God than there was for the psalmist to praise him. Are we permitting the confusion of the times to blind us to our obligation and privilege? The King of our song is the Saviour of men. Let us praise him!

God's Goodness and Mercy

Rejoicing in Judgment. It is easy to approve the judgments that fall upon others. We are always able to see why they deserve all they get. It is not so easy to adjust our mind to the acceptance of judgments that come to us. Why is this? Have we failed to conform our conception of God to the entirety of his nature? Do we think of him only as a dispenser of blessings without giving consideration to the laws by which he is able to thus bless? The psalmist seems to have been able to rejoice in judgments which concerned himself. Of course the one under consideration was a judgment which blessed him and others while they were oppressed. But the burden of his song indicates that he felt his own responsibility for the attitude of God toward him, for he was not an unspotted saint. He was acquainted with sin. He knew the rites of purification from sin. Therefore in the joy of his adoration of Jehovah he praises him as one who "executeth righteous acts." This hits both ways, and the psalmist accepts the full swing of its significance. Do we? Or do we praise God when things go smoothly and forget him or blame him when, because of our own stupidity, or sin, the course of our life becomes storm-stirred and unhappy?

Near-sighted Vision. The defects in human vision cause men to get queer ideas of what they see. Were they to recognize the defect and use a corrective before giving their conclusions it would not be quite so bad. But many will not do this, and their friends are constantly

embarrassed. The embarrassment arising over a man's near-sighted vision of God and his goodness becomes the man's own. It first limits him in his ability to think clearly about God, and then drives him into chidings which are not based upon the facts themselves but upon his confused conception of them. No full-voiced praise rises from such men and women. There is always a question which makes the throat clutch and the song refuse to come. The punishments which men receive in this life for their sins should not prevent them from taking the long look. The psalmist philosophizes. He says:

> **"Jehovah is merciful and gracious,**
> **Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.**
> **He will not always chide;**
> **Neither will he keep *his anger* forever.**
> **He hath not dealt with us after our sins,**
> **Nor rewarded us after our iniquities."**

The psalmist would put some good people in the class of the criminal who, deserving life-imprisonment and getting only ten years, complained about the hardship of justice. "God is always the benefactor," sings the ancient poet. His punishments are so insignificant compared with the blessings which he has showered upon men. O little minds that fail to see the boundless mercy of God even in his judgments!

> **"There's a wideness in God's mercy,**
> **Like the wideness of the sea;**
> **There's a kindness in his justice,**
> **Which is more than liberty."**

So sang Frederick W. Faber. So the psalmist sang.

A Father's Consideration. Every man who has heard the voice of a little child saying "Father" to him understands what the psalmist meant when he said:

> **"Like as a father pitieth his children,**
> **So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him."**

What father has not tried to devise ways by which the boy or girl might grasp his more mature judgment con-

cerning the things that they should or should not do? The light of love turning to perplexity in the little boy's eyes—who has not seen it and prayed for better wisdom with which to make things plain? Does God think of us in that way? Is he concerned that we shall get his viewpoint? We grieve that the childhood days will be over so soon. God remembers the makeup of man and knows that his days of earthly life are all too short to have him trudging along misunderstanding his heavenly Father. The young man who thanks his father for the advice and loving care that permitted him to avoid the pitfalls of youth is one with the full-grown man who praises God for his father-love and protection along the passing years. For with that relationship assured the coming years are robbed of their greatest terrors. Do we feel this relationship when we pray "Our Father"? Are we living as sons and daughters worthy of such a father's love?

The Day's Opportunity

An Eight-Hour Day? When Jesus was about to give sight to a man born blind he uttered the following significant words: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." There was no time limit on his efforts to help men. There is no time limit used by God in blessing mankind. But men themselves too often put a limit of this sort on the homage and praise which they give to God. What is the reason? Are we so intent upon the lessening of our hours of physical labor that we apply the same principles to our heart-song to our Creator? Life is short. Most of us are far behind in giving to God the praise due him for personal blessings received. If we make each day glow with our song of devotion we cannot catch up what we have neglected to do in the days now past. We are craving his righteousness for our children's children. Shall we be miserly in our homage to one from whom we expect blessings for our own flesh and blood when we are gone? Of course each day is crowded, and to-morrow will be more crowded than to-day. What then?

Charles Wesley must have thought about this matter, for he sings:

> "O for a thousand tongues to sing
> My great Redeemer's praise,
> The glories of my God and King,
> The triumphs of his grace."

Praise such as he would give could not be given in a lifetime with but one tongue to utter it. What shall we say, then, who do not even keep our one tongue busy with the song which is ever striving within us for vocal expression? Have we limited God to an eight-hour day? Or do we put that limit upon our homage to him and expect him to work twenty-four hours a day for us?

The Open Shop. There is no closed door to those who would praise God for his goodness. Nor is there any discrimination made as to who may have his blessings. Entrance to fellowship with him is for all on the same conditions. Here is where we have an advantage over the psalmist. Only the Israelites were God's children, in his thinking. But for our day the entire race of men may qualify by accepting the conditions. What new vision comes into the psalm as we sing it with our newer opportunity and privilege! "Whosoever will may come!" What a babel of tongues are demonstrating the democracy of the kingdom of God to-day! The ends of the earth are contributing their own peculiar words to the song. And a meaning born out of an ever-widening range of human experience is sweeping the song heavenward with a homage that the psalmist could not know. Only when the various tongues live in our own neighborhood do we begin to make definitions. We make them; God does not. The psalmist has said it for us, although he knew not how he prophesied:

> "The lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
> And his righteousness unto children's children;
> To such as keep his covenant,
> And to those that remember his precepts to do them.
> Jehovah has established his throne in the heavens;
> And his kingdom ruleth over all."

Why should we make tests of nationality? of education? of social status? How do we reconcile this attitude with our prayer, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory"? If our own praise of God were perfect, would we keep from him the praise of those who would sing our song if our love would teach them the music?

The Homage of Toil. Songs of service find a ready response to-day. The reality of religion is more and more manifesting itself in life relationships. The poet whose phrases ring out in music from the multitude gets his inspiration from the toilers of the world, whether they be the captains of industry or the humble feeders of a blast furnace. Men are being rated in accordance with the living of the creed that they profess. Homage to God is being lived out in the trying experiences of the day's work. What sort of a contribution to the praise of God are we making in this respect? The pressure of modern life is rapidly tearing away every shred of pretense from men. Folks are coming to be known for just what they are. The war has laid hearts bare without reserve. God is being known in new terminology. Where do we stand in all this? The daily task given us to do may become a dreary routine or a psalm of praise. With our minds set to do God's will and to "forget not all his benefits" we may have a large part in the song which the world is trying to learn through bloodshed, suffering, and woe. Wherever we are placed is our opportunity. Are we equal to it? In our search for words with which to express our adoration of God and our Master, Jesus Christ, let us so toil day by day that here and there a note will be struck that will give us a part in the psalmist's song when he cries out:

"Bless Jehovah, ye his angels,
That are mighty in strength, that fulfill his word,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts,
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
Bless Jehovah, all ye his works,
In all places of his dominion:
Bless Jehovah, O my soul."

Some Questions to Think About

What heart conditions are necessary in order to pay homage to God?

To what extent is the psalmist's song an expression of our experience?

Compare praise to God for personal and community blessings.

How far is it possible for us to keep a balance between blessings and praise?

What effect has the war had upon our praise to God?

Discuss ways of helping others to think clearly on this question.

In what way has our ability to accept judgment been lessened?

How does the father-relationship help us to understand God?

CHAPTER XII

GRATITUDE AND THANKSGIVING

The One Hundred and Sixteenth Psalm

"I love Jehovah, because he heareth
My voice and my supplications.
Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
Therefore will I call *upon him* as long as I live.
The cords of death compassed me,
And the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me:
I found trouble and sorrow.
Then called I upon the name of Jehovah:
O Jehovah, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
Gracious is Jehovah, and righteous;
Yea, our God is merciful.
Jehovah preserveth the simple:
I was brought low, and he saved me.
Return unto thy rest, O my soul;
For Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee.
For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
I will walk before Jehovah
In the land of the living.
I believe, for I will speak:
I was greatly afflicted:
I said in my haste,
All men are liars.
What shall I render unto Jehovah
For all his benefits toward me?
I will take the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of Jehovah.
I will pay my vows unto Jehovah,
Yea, in the presence of all his people.
Precious in the sight of Jehovah
Is the death of his saints.
O Jehovah, truly I am thy servant:
I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid;
Thou hast loosed my bonds.

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And will call upon the name of Jehovah.
Yea, in the presence of all his people,
I will pay my vows unto Jehovah,
In the courts of Jehovah's house,
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
Praise ye Jehovah."

Where Do We Stand?

The Usual Way. The man who would have given anything rather than have lost the scarf-pin presented to him by his wife usually rewards the finder with a meager gift. So great is the difference between our sense of appreciation before we secure that which we desire and after it is obtained. One might almost imagine, from many reports made of great achievements, that the individual making the report was under no obligations to anyone but himself for its content and form. How much credit does the young artist give to the master who taught him to discern form, to mix colors, and to interpret life and emotion on a bit of canvas? Frequently the only mention of the man who led him to the heights is by way of criticism or disparagement. Are we more just? Do we so recognize what others do for us that we feel grateful to them? And do we express our gratitude to them? Song and story are full of the sad drama of ingratitude. Every heart, at times, feels a twitch because of the part memory demands we each play in that drama. We are able to see all this in those about us because the ingratitude is directed at us. It causes us to question the worthwhileness of continuing to do for others. Could we not use our time to better advantage? Then with a start we realize that the exhortation, "Let him who lives in a glass house avoid the stone-throwing habit," has a pointed implication for us. We are guilty of forgetting the hand that fed us, the sympathy that cheered us, the mind that directed us. A bit of reminiscence permits the checking a long list of those whose lives would have been brighter had we shown our gratitude for what they did for us. Worse, still, is the accusing finger which points at us all along memory's

highway, reminding us that we have also been ungrateful to God. Has it been thoughtlessness? Just why have we failed at this point?

"There's a Reason." It is a bit awkward to begin giving expression to gratitude after years of neglecting to do it. However, one soon becomes used to it, and its practice brings a richer, keener appreciation of the opportunities and blessings of life. Thus item after item is added to the reasons why our song should be a psalm of thanksgiving rather than a dirge of complaint. From childhood to old age blessings multiply. Simple little events of happiness give place to the deeper experiences of mature life, until each day is full of causes for gratefulness. In addition to our thoughtlessness in the expression of our gratitude we lessen the force of the reasons for being grateful by a wrong way of estimating our blessings. Should a poor man refuse to thank God for his bread and meat, his humble but happy home, his wife and children, all well about him, because he reads in the newspapers of those able to spend the winter at Palm Beach or the summer in the mountains? There are other elements that should be considered. A year previous this man was without work, his family were without food, and one of his children sick unto death. What basis of comparison should he use in finding a reason for gratitude to God? True, he might long for even better conditions, and without doubt economic conditions ought to be remedied so that he shall have them, but has he no cause to be grateful even for things as they are? How does this man differ from us? The psalmist states his reason for being grateful in the first note of his song:

> **"I love Jehovah, because he heareth**
> **My voice and my supplications."**

Throughout the psalm one hears the undertone of "There's a reason." The psalmist had been at the gates of death. Sorrow, trouble, and despair were his portion. Life held a very gloomy outlook. He classed himself with the simple, those whose lack of wisdom and experience exposes them to danger. Out of this state of hopelessness Jehovah had

lifted him to health and happiness. Was he grateful? Did he go around telling his neighbors that "the fever could not have run much longer, anyway"? Listen to his words:

> **"Gracious is Jehovah, and righteous;**
> **Yea, our God is merciful.**
> . . . . . .
> **Return unto thy rest, O my soul;**
> **For Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee.**
> **For thou hast delivered my soul from death,**
> **Mine eyes from tears,**
> ***And* my feet from falling."**

The psalmist leaves no question as to a sense of gratitude on his part. He had received a blessing from God. He recognized it. He felt that there was sufficient reason for giving expression to his gratitude. So he sings a song of thanksgiving for all the ages to hear and heed. Do we "count our blessings," or do we merely complain about those which we fail to receive?

The Obligation to Give Thanks. A feeling of obligation to give thanks rested upon the heart of the psalmist. Whatever crudities of civilization may have hampered his life or hindered his thinking, he was many centuries in advance of some folks who pride themselves on this present age of opportunity and refinement. He was unable to receive great blessings without making suitable acknowledgment. He was the sort of man who would thank another for helping in his advancement, for watching through the night with his sick loved ones. Had he been a woman, he would thank the tired laborer who gave up his seat in the crowded car during the rush hour, the neighbor who called attention to tendencies in a child which the mother had not observed. Can any honest person receive even the ordinary blessings of life without feeling some such obligation? Why should the atmosphere of "The world owes me a living" pervade our relations with others so insistently? Why throw such a challenge into the face of God? Our efforts to teach our children to say "Thank you" should be pushed far enough to explain to them the philosophy of gratitude and thanks-

giving. The form of gratitude will then develop into the spirit of thankfulness as the years go by. Our own feelings toward others when they fail to meet this obligation to us is sufficient evidence of such a need. If a "Pollyanna" crusade is worth the propaganda, what results might we not obtain in a campaign of "Give thanks for what you receive"? Why not start it in a small way with ourselves?

Methods and Ways

A Method of Life. The psalmist took his troubles to God in prayer. This indicates a state of preparedness. He did not wait until the day of disaster to learn how to pray. It was a part of his method of life. He counted God in on all of his affairs, so that God knew the especial urgency of the present occasion for help. Prayer as a habit of life implies righteous purpose. The psalmist lived with his mind toward God. He had been daily "growing in grace." When he prayed, "O Jehovah, I beseech thee, deliver my soul," he did so with the assurance that his petition would be heard. One would like to have known the psalmist. He is refreshing. The heat of the day becomes restful in his presence. One feels the presence of the Spirit of God. The atmosphere of perplexity clarifies. In the rush of business and society and cares one hears a voice saying, "Be still and know that I am God." It was knowing God that put such confidence into the prayer of the psalmist. It is knowing God that gives visions to singers of God in a day like our own. The psalmist's experience appears isolated because he caught a strain of music and breathed into it his faith. But all about us are men and women singing with assurance in the midst of such commonplace experiences as washing of dishes, mending of shoes, running of great factories, editing newspapers, driving of big campaigns. Jesus has made it possible for men to know God. Those who have attained this knowledge do not boast about it. What they do is to proclaim the help which God gives to them. They "praise God, from whom all blessings flow." Are they fanatic? Was the psalmist? We cannot com-

pute the service rendered to the Kingdom by such proclaiming of God's goodness, but we do know how it has helped us. What promise of hope have we instilled into other hearts by letting folks know that we know God? Or are we still among those who take a pride in announcing that "God knows us"? What is our method of life in this respect?

God's Method. Faith and faithfulness are intimately related in the mind of God. At least his manifested goodness would so imply. And the experience of the psalmist seems to bear out the implication. In the extreme situation wherein the psalmist uttered a cry for help he had not let go his faith in God. Instead he used it and was faithful in the observance of all that faith in God demands. God dealt with him on that basis. Since he had pleaded with God with assurance that God is both righteous and merciful, he knew full well that any answer which would bring relief would take into account both faith *and* faithfulness. God uses that method with men to-day, both in response to personal prayers and prayers for the advancement of his kingdom on earth. The movements and campaigns in the church that have been launched by faith are legion. The number that have failed is very large. Those that have been successful have been marked by faithfulness as well as faith. Was God unmindful of all those that failed? Did he fail to appreciate what was being asked and done for the sake of his kingdom? No. That faith which lacks faithfulness is of too surface a nature to count on in the long, hard drive of establishing righteousness in the hearts of men as an every-day, workable proposition. If we ask God to lead every man and woman in the community into fellowship with the church, and then we fail to practice the principles upon which the Church of Jesus Christ is founded, ought we to expect the answer of our prayer? A prayer that does not have back of it faithful living according to the laws of God does not throb with the faith that overcomes. It lacks that force of which gratitude and thanksgiving are the external expressions. It is wanting in the assurance which comes from a knowl-

edge of God obtained through a life of living his way and thinking his thoughts. The prayer-life of a multitude of earnest folks is impoverished by a failure to take this truth into account. More saddening than the personal loss is the tremendous drag put upon the progress of the Kingdom by such prayers and such lives. In what ways does our faith and, hence, God's response to our prayers suffer because of our lack of faithfulness?

The Testimony of Conviction. The man cured of rheumatism by a particular medicine does not keep the good news all to himself. Meet him where you will, on the street corner, in the shop, or in the vestibule of the church, and he begins to sing the praises of his cure. You tell him that you are not troubled with rheumatism, and he endeavors to persuade you that you may be at some later date and had better be prepared. As long as he lives he will shout his gratitude from the housetops in order that folks may find help for their own troubles. Conviction lies back of such thanksgiving. Could you convince him that perhaps the remedy did not effect the cure, some change of diet, or the weather may have been responsible? Try it. Have you never had such strong convictions that you simply must talk about them? That is the way the psalmist felt. In his distress he had shouted, "All men are liars!" But he did not lose faith in God on account of this conviction. Why do we so often confuse men and God when men are unfaithful? All around us are circumstances and conditions which evoke utterances similar to the psalmist's. Were we to say "Amen" to these accusations, there would be no need of our confusing these acts of men with God's goodness and mercy. The psalmist may have felt that men were all liars, but he did not implicate God in the accusation. Why do we conclude that the church is a failure because a trustee short-weighed our coal or a church sister talked about us behind our back? The psalmist was convinced that even if men were untrustworthy, God is to be relied upon. He made a distinction well worth more than our passing notice, for on that distinction he set forth on his future life journey among men.

Let Men Know

Gratitude's Finest Expression. Do we ever sit down to figure out the best expression of gratitude that we can give for God's goodness? Or do we simply say, "We thank thee, Lord," and let the cause of our gratitude pass from our mind? The psalmist thought the matter through very carefully. The thoroughness of his consideration is seen in the conclusion which he reached. He could not forget the cause which he had for gratitude. One who walks for the first time after weeks of enfeebling sickness knows why he could not forget. It was his faith and faithfulness that stirred God to answer his prayer. Men had not helped him. There is a pathos in his desire as he cries:

> **"What shall I render unto Jehovah**
> **For all his benefits toward me?"**

Poetry gives place to prayer as he asks for light and guidance. Are we as concerned as this man was? Over and over he mulls his query: "What shall I render? What shall I render?" The answer comes like a profession of faith:

> **"I will take the cup of salvation**
> **And call upon the name of Jehovah."**

Away to the temple! He will publicly proclaim his gratitude. Every worshiper shall see him and go home to tell the folks. It shall become neighborhood talk. As he puts to his lips the cup which was a part of the sacrifice of thanksgiving for great and manifold deliverance all the world shall know that God has been wonderfully good to him. He was not only willing, but anxious, to give thanks "in the presence of all the people." Are we? Do we? Why not? He was willing to "call upon" or proclaim the name of Jehovah, so that all might know to whom his gratitude was due. How about starting such an excellent plan ourselves?

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving. The sacrifice of thanksgiving had a technical significance to the psalmist. It

was a part of the ritual of the church. It involved "unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour soaked." It was formal and ritualistic. But to the psalmist it had deep personal significance, otherwise he would not have celebrated the event in song. To him it was the giving expression to gratitude so great that he must carry it into the worship of his church. No other place was sacred enough. Why sing his thanksgiving to a few friends at a dinner party? Why recite his joy and gratitude to the people next door? No place but the temple would do. No expression but that of the ritual of the church would satisfy.

> **"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,**
> **And will call upon the name of Jehovah.**
> **I will pay my vows unto Jehovah,**
> **Yea, in the presence of all his people,**
> **In the courts of Jehovah's house,**
> **In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.**
> **Praise ye Jehovah."**

There is nothing half-hearted about the psalmist. He made his religion a thoroughgoing affair. When he had cause for gratitude he made it as public as he did his cry for help in his hour of need. What sacrifices of thanksgiving are we offering? In what sort of service may we render it more effectively? To what extent are we availing ourselves of this great privilege?

Some Questions to Think About

What reasons have we to be grateful to others? To God?

To what extent do we consider the expression of gratitude something we may give or not, just as we see fit?

What relation has prayer to an attitude of gratitude?

Think over some acts of faithfulness which have strengthened your faith and made you less faltering in prayer.

To what extent do you square up your convictions with God's goodness?

Are we ready and willing to give God credit in public for his goodness to us? Why do we not do it then?

What acts of service are we performing because of gratitude to God?

What effect would honest expression of our gratitude to God have on the life of our home? our church? our community?

CHAPTER XIII

HOPE

The One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Psalm

"When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.
Jehovah hath done great things for us,
Whereof we are glad.
Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah,
As the streams in the south.
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves
with him."

Sane Optimism

What Is Hope? The dictionary of life furnishes the best definitions of hope. He who searches in books for fitting phraseology with which to clothe it is never satisfied until he discovers a writer who explains hope as he himself has experienced it. To catalogue the hopes that have entered into the thinking of the average individual would be to write his biography, so interwoven with the day's experiences are they. To recite an academic definition of hope as "desire accompanied with expectation of obtaining what is desired, or belief that it is obtainable," may win a perfect mark in the classroom of the grammar school, but it does not give the content to the word which maturity and the stress of life demands. How would you define it? Would your reference books be your source material? Or would the memory of dull and gloomy days, when you were kept going by the sense of a brighter tomorrow, supply you with the concrete material with

which to make your meaning clear to others? The psalmist's song was written on a bad day. Immediate prospects were rather gloomy. He had seen a great hope fulfilled up to a certain point; then it stopped. So happy had his fathers been in the return of his people from their captivity in Babylon that their hearts overflowed with joy. The Israelites had experienced such a wonderful deliverance from an intolerable situation that they were as men dreaming dreams. They could not credit their senses. They rubbed their eyes to see if they were actually awake. They laughed and they sang. They shouted for very joy. As men freed from prison after years of confinement blink bewilderingly at the sun and know not which way to turn, so were they. Even the heathen had ceased their worship of Baal for a little while to comment on the way that Jehovah had finally come to the rescue of his people. The psalmist rejoiced in their experience as he cast his song into appropriate form. Why not hope for great things himself? He does. And he hopes largely. He bases his hope for his generation on what God did for his fathers. For what did he hope? It may be that in such questions our own understanding of hope will define itself. In what do we center our hopes? What material hopes have we? What intellectual hopes? Are our spiritual hopes allied with the other desires of our life? Little children are asking for the definition of hope. They find the word in song and story. Conversation is fraught with it. Political conventions ring with it. Is the definition of hope or the objects of hope of most significance? How would you explain it? In through the window comes the sound of a sweet voice singing:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Is hope of itself an experience? Out of our own book of the knowledge of life, what do we find hope to be?

The Goad of Hope. The women who clung to the life spars when thrown into the sea from the stricken Lusitania found hope all that kept them alive until rescued. The victories of life which have been won through hope are

not to be numbered. With everything against him—out of work, sickness at home, money all gone, clothes so shabby that he is turned away from places advertising for help—man after man has continued to tramp the city streets until work has been found. What material for gripping novels has been found along the trail of hope! How the souls of men and women have been stirred to try just a little bit longer because of hope! He who hopes does not sit with folded hands. He is active. He strives to secure that for which he hopes. Hope enlivens him to greater earnestness and endeavor. It was this sort of stimulus that acted as a goad to the psalmist. It kept him hard at the task of helping to reestablish the worship of Jehovah in his native land. Putting a nation on its feet after years of exile is not an easy task. Habits of life, newly acquired customs, looseness in observing religious obligations, lack of a sense of national loyalty—it is a task for more than a day to correct all these things. People saved from great hardship soon forget those who relieved them. All manner of obstacles and disappointments had entered into what looked like a task easy of accomplishment. Men become anxious and fearful when engaged in great undertakings. It is difficult to realize that others are capable of large trust in affairs. The psalmist knew all this. He was too busy, however, to permit it to dampen his ardor. He had a great hope. In so far as he was responsible for its fulfillment there would be no failure. To what extent does hope stimulate us to labor for the possible achievements of to-morrow? The psalmist hoped for a life for his people in which Jehovah was worshiped and given full sway. That such a day would arrive he had no doubt. His hope would keep him buoyant and enthusiastic during the intervening years. While he hoped and toiled the processes essential to such a culmination would be at work. In due time the development of his people would meet God's part in hope's fruition and the song of the harvesters would be heard in the land. The Christian life is not attained in a day. There are many hours after conversion when the psalmist's experience is relived. Does the hope of some day becom-

ing Christlike stimulate to nobler living to-day? Count over some of the things accomplished and difficulties overcome because of such hope. Where hope drives the soul to honest endeavor in Christian living, intimate fellowship with Christ himself is not far off.

Hope's Foundation. There is some basis for the hope expressed in the singing "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there." Regardless of the musical, psychological, or theological correctness of the hymn, such high hope does not exist without foundation. No more did the hope of the psalmist. With historic perspective he says:

"When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.
Jehovah hath done great things for us,
***Whereof* we are glad.**

This Jehovah, whom he would have his people worship; this God, in whom he put his trust, had already helped. Why not hope for further assistance? The joyous experience of those days now celebrated in his song will be repeated. As the parched and feeble brooks in the south country swell and overflow their banks when God sends the rains, so the weak community of Israel will be reinvigorated with fresh enthusiasm, material blessing, and the Spirit of Jehovah. Hope is not mysterious. How do we lay foundations for our hopes? Have the blessings of God in the past been of sufficient significance to warrant our hope for future blessings? Or are we now in the process of laying the foundations of a Christian life upon which to base our hopes of to-morrow?

A Few Adjustments

Why the Delay? If we put as close a time limit on our own achievements as we sometimes do on the fulfillment of our hopes, a new day would dawn in the affairs

of men. Our own needs and desires loom up so high that we forget the part that our faithful performance of daily duty has in the fulfillment of the hopes of others. Why do we insist upon our hope becoming realization so swiftly? Men hope for success in business, but they do not expect it to come the first week. They put capital into it. They study the people likely to trade with them. They purchase salable goods. They launch a campaign of advertising. They treat the few customers with the same courteousness that they would a store full. If the business for which they hoped does not materialize, they do not blame the people for not thronging their place of business. They do ask, "Why the delay?" But they ask it with reference to their analysis of the people, their selection of goods, and their method of advertising. They revise their system. Each day finds them hard at work while they continue to study their problem. Nothing is wrong with their hope of success. The people are spending vast amounts of money for merchandise similar to what they carry in stock. A year, two years, sometimes longer is required to get results. Life, like business, grows and develops slowly. The mind accepts and uses new ideas and ideals very gradually. With unseemly tardiness the soul responds to God's Spirit. Why not take account of these facts when it is *our* hope that we are considering? Delayed fulfillment of hope is not always delay. The time element enters into all of life's processes. It takes days of exercise to give to a weakly man a return of strength. The student spends weary nights with his books acquiring his hoped-for knowledge. The very nature of our hopes implies certain lengths of time between the birth of the desire in our mind and its possession. If God limited us in time as we do him, he could have little hope for us for a part in the citizenship of his kingdom. There is need of philosophizing a bit in dealing with our hopes. Sometimes they are fulfilled the day after we decide that they never will be, and we are put to shame as a result. What sort of trust in God do we need in order to be hopeful when it looks to us as though he has forgotten us?

"Me and My Wife." Somewhere a writer, stirred by the narrowness of the prayers which he heard offered, wrote the following:

> "Lord, bless me and my wife,
> My son John and his wife,
> We four,
> No more. Amen."

He might also have characterized the selfishness of the hopes of some people in similar strain. The hope of the psalmist was not for himself alone. It included all of his people. It was burdened with the religious need of his family, his friends, and his enemies. Not his the desire to rejoice in sanctified solitude. He would see the multitude glorifying God and rejoicing in his fellowship. Are our hopes thus broad? Do we look out into the inequalities of life and hope for a place at the top for ourself? As sickness wipes out family after family, do we hope merely that *our* family may be spared? The interrelationships of human life are too many for such selfish hopes. Besides, the sort of selfishness which such hopes develop soon impairs the ability to desire the best things in life. Away with hoping for all of the praise in life, all of the easy places, all of the unusual experiences, all of the big opportunities, all of the best blessings God has to bestow. Democracy is a prized word in our day. Let us democratize our hopes. Men are longing for the kingdom of God on earth, which is another way of expressing the hope of the psalmist. Let us broaden our hopes so as to include the Kingdom's needs in all their fullness. We will thus include ourselves in the Kingdom's advance. The love of Christ and the will of God will shine through our hopes. The fulfillment which we so much desire will be all the nearer, for hopes become what God himself desires for us.

Getting Results

The Hope of the Sower. The psalmist knew the ways of a farmer. If he had not himself cultivated the soil, he

had watched others prepare the ground and plant and harvest. He knew that the harvest would not materialize without the planting. He also knew that the allotted time for development and growth must pass before the harvest song. So he took heart as he thought over the hope so dear to his thinking. He would put his best into the sowing process. Then would he be able to sing with rapture on the day toward which he looked. There are some who cannot sing the hymns of the church because they have never yet put any life-content into their meaning. "I love thy kingdom, Lord," never lifts in strong, resonant phrase from the lips of a half-hearted worshiper of God. But he who has found a Saviour at the altar of the church, who has been practicing the teachings of Jesus, who has been fighting a winning battle over sin—listen to the words as he sings them! The psalmist seemed to think that a man gets out of life only in proportion as he puts into life. Was he correct in his conclusion? Certainly a man who plants turnip seeds does not harvest watermelons. What sort of seed does our hope prompt us to plant? Should we expect character results in others any more rapidly than we furnish examples of such character products? What obligations does this suggest? Are we hoping more largely than we are sowing in character, love, deeds, example, Christlikeness? Do we sow with the same earnestness as we hope for harvests? The psalmist hoped largely. It was for something definite. He was so earnest about it that his hope is preserved in our psalm. Do we anticipate the fulfillment of our hopes as really as he did? The feeling of certainty here must effect the shaping of our life in preparation for what we expect. For what harvests are we looking in our lives? in the lives of loved ones? in the lives of our friends? in the life of our community?

The Great Fulfillment. Underlying all hope such as that of the psalmist is the conviction that man is created in the spiritual image of God. He has in him possibilities of godlikeness. Is our greatest hope of such character as to center in this great truth? Life is short. The years speed away all too rapidly. Does a hope of eternal fel-

lowship with God make the years a period of developing that fellowship here? Or are our hopes all of this life? The lisping words of babyhood seem far away to a man in middle life. Gray hair and feeble steps wait almost at the next corner. Life in the living of it is good. But across the passing years we ever hear the voice of the preacher of old as he urges us: "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; yea, they shall be afraid of *that which* is high and terrors *shall be* in the way; and the almond-tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it." Does this ancient sermon find a response in our hopes? What changes in our hopes would make us better men and women? The psalmist has long gone on who bade us hope in God. Singers of later generations have lifted up their harps and sung their faith in other tongues. But the heart of the singer has ever been stirred by man's greatest and most insistent hope. The song lives on because it finds a universal response. Heart after heart warms to its measures. It sinks all other hopes of men into an incidental relationship. It was the hope of our fathers. To-day it is encouraging hundreds of thousands, and to-morrow the number will be increased. Out of the hope of the psalmist and the hope which has become our own we may sing with Frederic

Lawrence Knowles, one of our latter-day interpreters of life, these words of truth and triumph:

"This body is my house—it is not I;
Herein I sojourn till in some far sky
I lease a fairer dwelling, built to last
Till all the carpentry of time is past.
When from my high place viewing this lone star,
What shall I care where these poor timbers are?
What though the crumbling walls turn dust and loam—
I shall have left them for a larger home!
What though the rafters break, the stanchions rot,
When earth has dwindled to a glimmering spot!
When thou, clay cottage, fallest I'll immerse
My long cramped spirit in the universe.
Through the uncomputed silences of space
I shall yearn upward to the leaning Face.
The ancient heavens will roll aside for me,
As Moses monarch'd the dividing sea.
This body is my house—it is not I;
Triumphant in this faith I live and die."

Some Questions to Think About

Why is hope of such significance to human life?

Is the correct definition of hope as important as its possession?

What is the basis of our hopes?

What has the delayed fulfillment of some hope of ours taught us as to the strength of our faith?

Are we sowing and planning for the fulfillment of our hopes as earnestly as we are hoping?

What has the future for us in the light of our present hopes?

To what extent is our hope to be like Christ being fulfilled day by day?

What is our hope after death?

Disobedience

James James
Morrison Morrison
Weatherby George Dupree
took great
Care of his Mother
Though he was only three.

James James
Said to his Mother,
"Mother," he said, said he;
"You must never go down to the
end of the town,
if you don't go down with me

James James
Said to his Mother,
"Mother," he said, said he;

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